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66 Mersea

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by John Beynon

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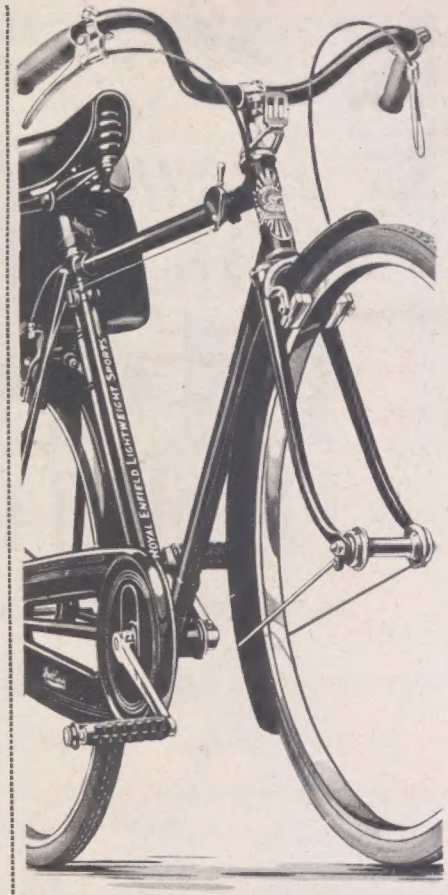

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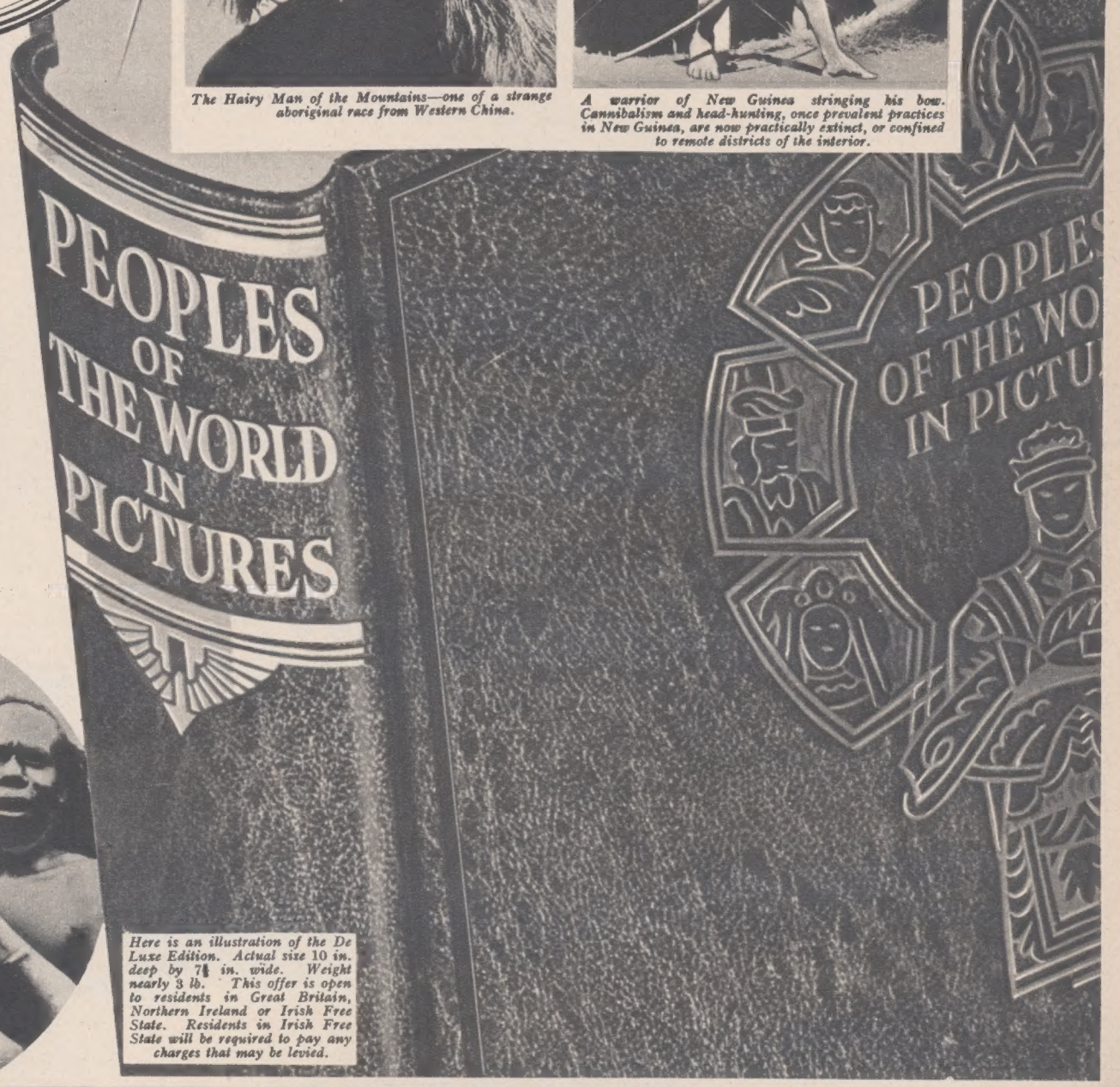

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An African spirit dancer.

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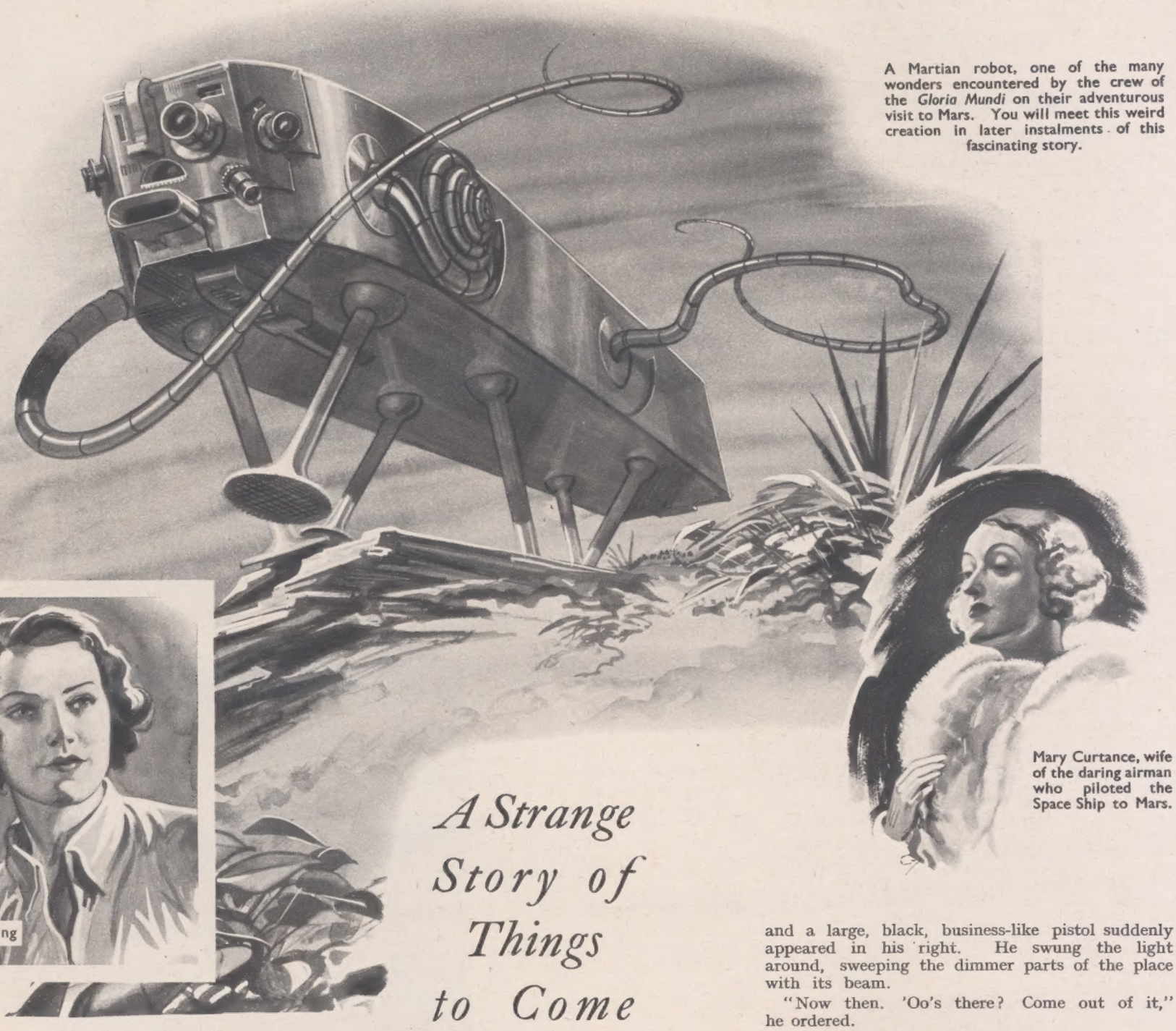

A Martian robot, one of the many wonders encountered by the crew of the *Gloria Mundi* on their adventurous visit to Mars. You will meet this weird creation in later instalments of this fascinating story.

Joan Shirning

Mary Curtance, wife of the daring airman who piloted the Space Ship to Mars.

A Strange Story of Things to Come

by John Beynon

Author of "The Secret People"

JAKE REILLY, the night watchman, made his usual round without any apprehension of danger. He was even yawning as he left the laboratory wing and came into the main assembly hangar. For a moment he paused on the threshold, looking at the structure in the centre of the floor. He wondered vaguely how they were getting on with it. Mighty long job, building a thing like that. It hadn't looked any different for months, as far as he could see.

But Jake could not see far. The towering object of his inspection was so closely scaffolded that only here and there could the dim lights filter between the poles to be reflected back from a polished metal surface.

"Workin' inside it mostly, now, I s'pose," he told himself.

He switched on his lamp and let its white beam wander about inquisitively. The floor plan of this, the central part of the building, was circular. Around the walls lathes, power drills and other light machine tools were disposed at intervals. The constructional work cut off his view of the opposite wall, and he moved round it, conscientiously conducting his search.

He let his light play upwards, sweeping the narrow gallery which circled the wall, and noticing that the doors giving upon it were all shut. He sent the beam still higher, above the level of the dim, shaded lights, to the distant roof, and then tilted his lamp so that its bright circle ran down the curved metal side again.

"Like bein' inside a blessed gasholder, that's what it is," he told himself, not for the first time. "Pile o' money that thing must've cost, and I don't s'pose it'll ever go."

A sudden sound caused him to stiffen. Somewhere there had been a faint clink of metal upon metal. He transferred his lamp to his left hand, and a large, black, business-like pistol suddenly appeared in his right. He swung the light around, sweeping the dimmer parts of the place with its beam.

"Now then. 'Oo's there? Come out of it," he ordered.

There was no answer. His voice boomed round the metal wall, slowly diminishing into silence.

"Better come out quick. I got a gun," Jake told the dimness.

He began to back towards the door where the alarm button was situated.

"Better come quiet, 'nless you want a bullet in you," he said.

But still there was no reply. He was in reach of the alarm now. He hung the lamp on the little finger of his pistol hand and reached, without turning, for the switch.

There was a sudden "phut" somewhere in the shadows. Jake shuddered convulsively. The pistol and the lamp clattered together to the ground, and he slumped on top of them.

A dark figure slipped from behind the scaffolding and ran across the floor. It bent for a moment over the fallen watchman. Reassured, it dragged the body aside, and laid it inconspicuously behind one of the lathes. Returning, it kicked the lamp away, picked up the fallen pistol and slid it into its own pocket.

For some seconds the dark figure stood silent and motionless, then, satisfied that there had been no alarm, it raised its arm and took steady aim at the

(*Continued on page* 8)

Continuing Stowaway *to* Mars

nearest of the dim lamps. Four times came the muffled "phut" as of a stick hitting a cushion, and each time it was followed by a not very different sound as an electric globe collapsed into fragments.

In the utter darkness followed clicks which told of a new magazine sliding into the pistol. Then, with a series of carefully shielded flashes, the intruder made his cautious way towards the central scaffolding.

A door of the balcony suddenly opened, letting a fan of light into the blackness.

"Hullo," said a voice, "what's happened to the lights? Where's that fool Reilly? Reilly! Where the devil are you?" it bawled.

The figure on the floor below delayed only an instant, then it raised its pistol against the man silhouetted in the doorway. Again came the muffled thud. The man above disappeared, and the door slammed shut. The man with the pistol muttered to himself as he continued on his way to the scaffolding.

He had barely reached it when a blaze of intense flood-lighting threw every detail of the place into view. He looked round wildly, dazzled by the sudden glare, but he was still alone. Again he raised his pistol, training it on one of the blinding floods. "Phut!" There went one, now for the next——

But there was to be no next. The roar of an explosion, thunderous within the metal walls, made him miss his aim. He turned swiftly. There was a second roar. The impact of a heavy bullet spun him round and sent him crashing headlong against the foot of the scaffolding.

"Got him," a voice announced.

The door in the gallery opened wide again.

"Damned lucky he didn't get you," said another.

"Awkward angle for him. He hit the rail," the first replied, calmly.

A babble of men's voices was heard approaching rapidly. A door on the opposite side of the ground floor was thrown back to reveal a tousle-headed, sleepy-eyed group. It was evident that the sound of shots had awakened them, and they had delayed just long enough to slip greatcoats over their pyjamas and to seize their weapons. One of the men in the gallery called down:

"It's all right. We got him. He's round this side."

The two of them made their way along the gallery to the staircase while the newcomers crossed the floor. By the time they had descended there was a small crowd round the body of the intruder. The man who was kneeling beside it looked up.

"He's dead," he said.

"How's that, Doctor? I didn't——"

"No, you got him in the shoulder, but he knocked his head against one of the poles as he fell."

"Damn. I'd have liked to have got something out of him. Anything to show who he is?" He looked round at the assembled men. "Where the devil's that Reilly got to? Go and fetch him, someone."

One of the group made off for the purpose. Close by the door he stopped at the sight of a foot protruding from behind the lathe mounting. He looked more closely, and called to the others.

"Here's Reilly. He got him, I'm afraid."

The doctor rose from beside the first corpse and hurried across. One look at the watchman was enough.

"Poor old Jake, right in the heart." He turned back to the tall man who had been on the gallery. "What had we better do with them, Mr. Curtance?"

Dale Curtance frowned and hesitated a moment.

"Better bring them both up to my office," he decided.

The doctor waited until the bearers had retired, closing the door behind them, then he looked across at Dale.

"What actually happened?" he asked.

Dale shrugged his shoulders.

"I know about as much as you do. I had been working late in here with Fuller. We didn't hear anything—at least, I didn't. Did you, Fuller?" The secretary shook his head. Dale went on: "Then when we went out on to the gallery the lights were out, and somebody using a silencer took a pot shot at me. Naturally, we went back and turned on the floods, then I potted him."

"You don't know him?"

"Never seen him before—as far as I know. Have either of you?"

Both the others shook their heads. The doctor crossed to the body and continued the examination which had been cut short by the finding of the watchman.

"Not a thing on him," he announced, after a while. "Shouldn't be surprised if he turned out to be a foreigner; clothes aren't English, anyway."

There was a considerable pause.

"You realise, of course," the doctor added, "that we shall have to have the police in?"

Dale frowned. "We can't—er——?"

"No, we certainly cannot. Why, all the men in the place will know about it by now. It'd be bound to leak out pretty soon. And that wouldn't look too good. No, I'm afraid you'll have to go through with it."

Dale was still frowning. "Damnation! That means the end of our privacy. The papers will be splashing it all around. The place will be overrun with reporters sniffing into every corner and trying to bribe everybody. I wanted to keep it quiet for months yet—and now they'll get the whole thing."

Fuller, the secretary, put in: "Does it really matter very much now? After all, we're well into construction—nobody else could possibly build a challenger in the time available. It doesn't seem to me that we've really much to lose—except our peace, of course."

"That's true," Dale nodded. "It's too late for them to start building now, but we're going to be pestered and hindered at every turn. And once the secret's out, it won't all be unintentional hindering."

The doctor paused in the act of lighting his pipe. He looked thoughtfully at Dale.

"It strikes me that the secret's already been blown. What do you suppose *he* was nosing around for?" He nodded in the direction of the black-suited corpse. "He wasn't just a casual burglar, you can depend on that. Silenced gun, no marks of identification, knew his way about here. No, somebody's on to you already, my boy, and whoever it is sent a spy to get hold of some more details—or to do some damage."

"But it's too late. Nobody could build in time. We shall have all our work cut out to finish by the end of September ourselves."

"Unless," said the doctor, gently, "unless they are building already. Two can play at secrecy. One of the odd things about you men of action is that you so frequently forget that there are other men of action. Well, now I suppose we'd better call the police."

The figure on the floor below delayed only an instant, then raised its pistol against the man silhouetted in the doorway.

Dale Curtance could not be called a man without fear. Not only because a man without fear is a man without imagination, but also because the old terrors die hard and the world has so multiplied the causes of fear that no one is left entirely unafraid. But, looking at Dale, at his six-foot, broad shouldered form, his long arms with their strong, freckled hands, his blue eyes, cold and hard as ice, one could seem to see far back along a line of Norse descent to less complex ancestors: stern fighters who, sword in hand, feared nothing in this world and little in the next—for they honoured Odin only to secure for themselves an eternity of battle among the champions of Valhalla. Of Dale, their descendant into a world where the battle is not necessarily to the strong, nor even the race to the swift, it might truthfully be said that he feared less and dared more than his fellows.

Dale should not have married—at least, he should not have married a woman of Mary's type. And inwardly Mary herself knew that now.

He should have swept up one of the worshipping little things he had thrilled in the past. He should have installed in his home one of those pretty little golden-heads whose hope it was, and whose perpetual joy it would be, that she was the chosen and the closest to the hero acclaimed by millions. The envy of those millions would have been her constant nourishment; she would have lived in the reflected

blaze of his triumphs, and all might have been happy ever afterwards—or until Dale should break his neck.

Mary had not been a worshipper. She had not the temperament though she could not, at first, remain quite insensitive to the glamour of his success. It may have been her calm in contrast with the bubbling delight of the others which attracted him at their first meeting. He may have been in a mood which was tired of popular triumph and easy conquest. Whatever the cause, he fell very blindly in love with her. And Mary did not fall in love; she began to love him in a way which he never could and never did understand.

This morning, sitting up in bed with the newspaper spread across the untouched breakfast-tray, she went back over it all.

A swift wooing and a swift marriage. She had been swept by a word out of her calm life into an insane volution of publicity. Her engagement had been a time of pesterment by interviewers, offers for signed articles, requests from photographers, suggestions by advertisers. The Press had played the occasion up well: they had even taken her own wedding away from her and substituted a kind of public circus.

That she resented it, Dale never knew. It was inevitable that they should see things differently. The circle of her upbringing had been unostentatious folk who had neither suffered from nor wanted popular publicity. Dale, on the other hand, had been born practically on the front page of a newspaper—with a silver spoon in his mouth and a silver megaphone to announce his arrival. The first and, as it transpired, the only son of David Curtance, known far and wide, despite his personal antipathy to the phrase, as "The Aerial Ford."

Yes, Dale had been NEWS from the time of his birth. They had splashed it about in large type: To David Curtance, the man who made the Gyrocurts—the Flivvers of the Air—the Multi-Millionaire, the world's paramount mass producer of aircraft, a son, Dale. No wonder publicity failed to worry him.

After their limelit honeymoon, the Press had let them go for a time. And though Mary could almost feel the journalistic eyes peering at her in the hope of scooping the first news of an impending "happy event," more than two years had passed in comparative peace. Dale's name was to be seen only infrequently on the front pages. He had seemed to be well in the process of changing from a current to a legendary hero.

And now, this . . . !

Under the date, the tenth of March, 1981, ran the banner headline:

DOUBLE DEATH IN CURTANCE HANGAR

closely followed by:

TRAGEDY AT SPEED KING'S WORKS

Mary, frowning, read of the fates of a nightwatchman and an intruder, identity at present unknown. The latter, it appeared, had been worsted by Dale himself in the course of prolonged and desperate duel.

But, if the account made her irritable, it had been left to the final paragraph to arouse her real perturbation.

One of the effects of the tragedy has been to reveal that much secret experimenting has been lately taking place at the Curtance shops. We are informed from a reliable source that a new type of craft is already in an advanced state of construction though no details can yet be revealed. "What is Curty going to do next?" is the question which many will ask themselves. Though Dale Curtance himself maintains strict silence on the subject, there can be no doubt that this new rocket 'plane is intended to contest yet another record. Whatever he intends to attempt with it, we know that not only our own good wishes but those of all our readers will go with him. "Curty," who has done more than any other man to put England "on top in the air," will find when he makes his come-back that no one has been allowed to usurp his place in England's Hall of Fame. Good Luck to you, Curty.

Mary pressed the bell-push beside her bed. To the maid who answered she said:

"Doris, tell Mr. Curtance I would like to see him at once, please."

The girl hesitated.

"He's very busy, madam," she said, uncertainly. "The gentlemen from the newspapers——"

Mary raised herself on her elbows and looked out of the window. A number of gyrocurts and other small aircraft was dotted about the lawn and the field beyond. Odd that she had not noticed them arriving.

"Have they been here long?" she asked.

"Some of them nearly all night, I understand, madam, and the others came very early this morning. They've been waiting to see Mr. Curtance, and he only went downstairs a few minutes ago."

"I see. Then perhaps you had better not disturb him at present."

As the girl went out, Mary relaxed on her pillow, looking unseeingly at the ceiling. It was impossible, as she knew from experience, to tear Dale away from the pertinacious young men of the Press. The Public came first, and herself second.

When she had married Dale, she had partially understood him, and had managed to work up a sympathy with his interests. Now, she was forced to admit, she understood him better and had lost sympathy with those interests. In rare moments of complete frankness she admitted her jealousy of those other interests and her resentment of other people's share in him.

Ten years ago, when he was just twenty-four, he had won the first non-stop Equatorial Flight—and for that thousands of people had begun to idolise him. And it had only been the start of a fantastic record of success. He had gone on to triumph after triumph, collecting prizes and further acclamation in his spectacular career.

Since then he had lowered the Equatorial record three times and still held it, together with the Greenwich to Greenwich Meridian record, and goodness knew how many more. Partly through luck, but mostly by hard work and endurance he had grown in the public view to the stature of a fabulous superman: the stuff of which the old world would have made a demi-god.

She had regretted, but accepted the fact that the mass could give him something which she as an individual could not. Curiously, it was his preoccupation with inanimate things which caused her more active resentment. Once, in a state of depression, she had confided to a friend:

"With Dale it is not people who are my rivals so much as things. Things, things, things! Why do men think so much of things? Big, restless and—to them—such absorbing things. Why are they always wanting to change and invent—more machines, more and more machines? I hate their machines! Sometimes I think they are the natural enemies of women. Often when I see a rocket-plane go by, I say to myself: 'Mary, that is your rival—it can give him more than you can. It has more of his love than you have.' . . . No, it's not nonsense. If I were to die now, he would turn to his machines and forget all about me in making them. But if his machines were taken away, he would not devote himself to me—he would mope and be miserable. I hate his machines. I'd like to smash them all into little bits."

It had not been wise, she realised now, to extract that promise from him—that he would give up racing rocket-planes and only enter contests for lightweights of the flipabout class. He had given it only grudgingly and it had fretted him though he had tried at first to hide it. Now she knew he was going to break it—so, apparently, did the newspapers.

Her thoughts were broken into by a crunching of gravel beneath hurrying feet. Voices, mostly male, shouted incomprehensible sentences to one another. There was a dull throbbing of engines followed by the whirr of revolving sails as the gyrocurts and other flipabouts on the lawn began to take the air.

The door opened and Dale came in. He bent over and kissed her. Seating himself on the side of the bed, he took one of her hands in his own and apologised for his lateness. Mary lay back, watching his face. She heard scarcely a word that he said.

"Dale," she interrupted, "what did all those reporters want?"

He hesitated for a fraction of a second.

"We had a little trouble down at the shops last night. Nasty business. They wanted to know all about it, darling. You know how they're always after every little detail."

She looked steadily into his eyes.

"Dale, please be honest with me. Weren't they much more interested in that?" She picked up the paper and pointed to the final paragraph. He read it, with a worried look on his face.

"Well, yes—perhaps they were."

"And now that you've told the whole world, don't you think you might tell your own wife?"

"I'm sorry, dear. I wasn't telling anyone at all—nobody would have known anything about it for months yet if it hadn't been for that business last night. Then they were on to it at once—they couldn't be stopped."

"Dale. You promised me you would give up rocket racing."

He got up and crossed to the window, pushing both his hands deep in his trouser pockets.

"I must. I didn't know what I was saying when I promised that. I thought I could settle down and give it all up. I've tried, but I'm not cut out to be a designer of other men's machines. Hang it all, I'm still young. These last two years I've designed and built some of the best rocket-planes in the world—and then I've had to sit by like an old fogy of eighty while young fools lose races with them, and crash them by damn bad flying. Do you think it's been easy for me to watch them being mishandled while all the time I *know* what they are capable of—and could make them do it? This last year has been just hell for me down at the shops; it's been like—like giving birth to one still-born child after another."

"Dale!"

"I'm sorry, Mary darling." He turned back to her. "I shouldn't have said that. But can't you see what it means to me? It's taking all my life away. Try to see it, dear. Look, all your life you've wanted the baby you're going to have; suppose you were suddenly told that you couldn't have it after all—could never have a baby at all. Wouldn't everything become worthless for you? Wouldn't the bottom just drop out of life? That's how I've felt. I promised you I would give up the thing I've wanted to do all my life—the thing I've been doing all my life until I met you. Well, I've tried, I've done my best, but I can't keep that promise. . . ."

Mary lay silent. She did not understand; did not want to understand. He was selfish—and stupid. To compare a smashed machine with a still-born child.

He was going on now. Something about her creating with her body and he with his mind. That neither of them should be permitted to ban the other's right to creation. Well, she had never said that he should not create rocket-planes—only that he should not fly them. It was not fair. . . . It was his child that she was going to bear. His child that was making her feel so old and ill. . . .

"What are you going to do with this new rocket?" she asked at last.

"Have a shot at the Keuntz Prize," he said, shortly.

Mary sat up suddenly. Her eyes widened in a horrified stare.

"Oh, Dale, no——" Her voice trailed away as she fell forward in a faint.

Tuesday's evening papers made considerable play with Dale's announcement, but a citizenry hardened through the years to seeing the sensations of one day's end amended or ignored at the beginning of the next, received the news on Wednesday morning as a novelty. It was impossible to ignore the headlines which erupted from Fleet Street.

CURTANCE TO DARE DEATH FLIGHT

"CURTY" TO ATTEMPT KEUNTZ PRIZE

BRITISH AIRMAN TO CHALLENGE SPACE

The *Poster* and the *Telegram* printed leaders upon British pluck and daring with references to Nelson, General Gordon and Malcolm Campbell. (The *Poster* also revealed that Dale had once ridden to hounds.)

The *Thunderer* referred in a brief paragraph to "this interesting project."

At nine o'clock in the morning the *Evening Banner* brought out special contents bills:

AIRMAN'S PLANS

To which the *Stellar* replied:

CAN HE DO IT?

At ten o'clock the editor's telephone in the *Daily Hail* offices buzzed again. A voice informed him that Mrs. Dale Curtance wished to see him on urgent business.

"All right," he said. "Shoot her up."

At ten-twenty he began to hold a long and complicated telephone conversation with Lord Dithernear, the proprietor of the Concentrated Press. At approximately ten-forty he shook hands with Mrs. Curtance and returned to his desk with a revised policy.

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At eleven o'clock, Mr. Fuller, on behalf of Mr. Curtance, told an agency that he was in need of half a dozen competent secretaries.

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At twelve o'clock one Bill Higgins, workman, employed upon the construction of the Charing Cross Bridge, knocked off for lunch. As he fed his body upon meat-pie and draughts of cold tea he regaled his mind with the world's news as rendered by the *Comet*. Working gradually through the paper, he arrived in time at the front page. There he was impressed by a large photograph of Dale Curtance skilfully taken from a low viewpoint to enhance the heroic effect. His eyes wandered up to the headline whereat he frowned and nudged his neighbour.

(*Continued on page* 10)

Continuing Stowaway *to* Mars

"What is this 'ere Keuntz Prize, Alf?" he demanded.

"Coo!" remarked Alf, spitting neatly into the Thames below. "You never 'eard of the Keuntz Prize? Coo!"

"No, I 'aven't," Bill told him. He was a patient man.

Alf explained, kindly. "Well, this bloke, Keuntz, was an American. 'E 'ad the first fact'ry for rocket-planes,—in Chicago it was, and 'e got to be a millionaire in next to no time. But it wasn't enough for 'im that 'is blasted rocket-planes was banging and roarin' all over the world; 'e didn't see why they couldn't get right away from the world."

"Whadjer mean? The Moon?" Bill inquired.

"Yus, the Moon and other places. So in 1970 or thereabouts 'e goes and puts down five million dollars—what's more'n a million pahnds—for the first bloke wot gets to a planit—and back."

"Coo! A million pahnds!" Bill was impressed. "And nobody ain't done it yet?"

"Naow—not likely," Alf spoke with contempt. "Nor never will, neither," he added, spitting once more into the Thames.

At four o'clock the news came to a bungalow halfway up the side of a Welsh mountain. The girl who brought it was breathing hard after her climb from the village below, and she addressed the middle-aged man in the bungalow's one sitting-room excitedly.

"Daddy, they're saying that Dale Curtance is going to try for the Keuntz Prize."

"What? Let me see."

He pounced on the copy of the *Comet* which protruded from her shopping-bag, and settled down to it with a kind of desperate avidity.

"At last," he said, as he reached the end of the column, "at last. Now they will find out that we were right. We shall be able to leave here, Joan. We shall be able to go back and look them in the face."

"Perhaps, but he hasn't done it yet, Daddy."

"Young Curtance will do it if anyone can. And they'll have to believe him."

"But, Daddy dear, it doesn't even say that he is going to try for Mars. Venus is much nearer; it's probably that."

"Nonsense, Joan, nonsense. Of course it's Mars. Look here, it says he intends to start sometime in October. Well, Mars comes into opposition about the middle of April next year. Obviously he's working on Drivers' estimates of just under twelve weeks for the outward journey and under eleven for the return. That will give him a few days there to prospect and to overhaul his machine. He can't afford to leave the return a day past opposition. You see, it all fits in."

"I don't see, darling, but I've no doubt you're right."

"Of course I'm right, it's as plain as can be. I'm going to write to him."

The girl shook her head.

"I shouldn't do that. He might hand it over to one of the newspapers—and you know what that would mean."

The man paused in his elation, and frowned.

"Yes. Perhaps he would. We'll wait, my dear. We'll wait until he tells them what he's found there. Then we'll go back home and see who laughs last . . ."

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At five o'clock a telephone conversation between Mrs. Dale Curtance and her mother-in-law was in progress.

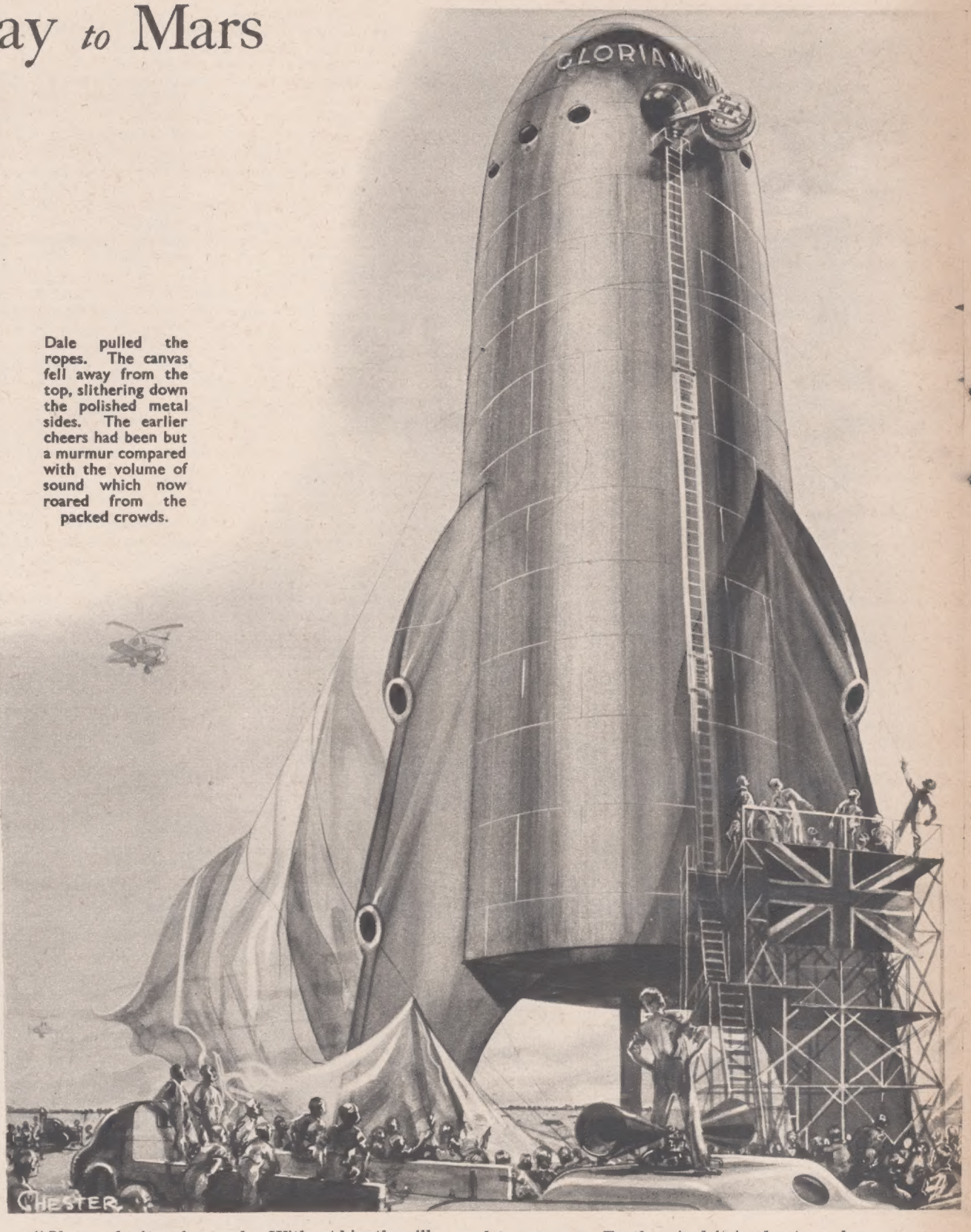
" . . . But, Mary dear, this is useless," the elder Mrs. Curtance was saying. "You'll never be able to stop him. I know Dale. Once he's made his mind up to a thing like this, he can't be stopped."

"But he must be stopped. I can't let him do it. I'll move everything to stop him. You don't know what it means to me."

"My dear, I know what it means to me—and I am his mother. I also know something of what it means to him. We've just got to suppress our own selfishness."

"Selfishness! You call it selfishness to try to stop him killing himself?"

"Mary, don't you see what you are doing? You're losing him. If you did manage to stop him, he'd hate you for it, and if you go on as you are doing, he'll hate you for trying to stop him. Please, please give it up, Mary. It's not fair on Dale or yourself or the child. In your condition you can't afford to behave like this. All we can do is what most women have to do—make the best of it."



Dale pulled the ropes. The canvas fell away from the top, slithering down the polished metal sides. The earlier cheers had been but a murmur compared with the volume of sound which now roared from the packed crowds.

"Oh, you don't understand. Without him there'll be nothing for me to make the best of."

"There will be the child, Mary. You must get right away from all this. Come down here and stay quietly with me till that's over."

"How can I 'stay quietly' anywhere while this is going on? You must come up and see him. Perhaps if we both talked to him—— Will you come?"

Mrs. Curtance paused before she answered.

"All right. I will come."

She put down the receiver and sighed. The most that she could hope for was that Mary should be convinced of the futility of kicking against fate.

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At six o'clock the announcer read two S O S messages and the weather report, and added:

"No doubt everyone has read the newspaper reports of Mr. Curtance's proposed bid for the Keuntz Prize. We have been able to persuade Mr. Curtance himself to come to the studio to tell you what he hopes to do. Mr. Dale Curtance."

Dale's pleasant features faded in on millions of television screens, smiling in a friendly fashion at his unseen audience.

"It is kind of the B.B.C. to invite me here this evening," he began, "and I am grateful to them for giving me the opportunity to correct certain misunderstandings which seem to be current regarding my intentions. Firstly, let me say that it is quite true that I mean to attempt to reach another planet and to return to Earth. And it is also true, for a number of reasons which I will not go into now, that the planet I have chosen for this attempt is Mars. But it is quite untrue that I intend to make this flight alone. Actually there will be five of us aboard my ship when she takes off.

"I should like to dispel, too, the prevalent idea that I am engaged in deliberate suicide. I assure you we are not. All five of us could easily find much cheaper and less arduous ways of killing ourselves.

"There are, of course, risks. In fact, there are three distinct kinds of risk: the known ones which we can and shall prepare against: the known ones which we must trust to luck to avoid: and the entirely unknown. *But* we are convinced that we have more than a sporting chance against them all—if we were not, we should not be making the attempt.

"Thanks to the courage and pertinacity of those who from the time of Piccard's ascent into the stratosphere in 1931 have pushed forward the examination of space, we shall not be shooting ourselves into the completely unknown. Thanks also to them, the design of my ship will be an improvement on any which has gone before, and unlike those of the early pioneers she is designed to contend with many of the known conditions of space as well as in the hope of surviving the unknown. Each expedition to leave Earth stands a

ILLUSTRATED
BY CHESTER

better chance of success than its predecessor—which is another way of saying that it risks less. Therefore, I say that if we are successful in this venture, if we gain for Britain the honour of being the first nation to achieve trans-spatial communition, it must never be forgotten that better men than we gave their lives to make it possible.

"If one can single out one man from an army of heroes and say, 'This is the greatest of them all,' I should point my finger at Richard Drivers. Compared with the risks that brave genius took, we take none. The story of that amazing man's persistence in the face of a jeering world when three of his friends had already crashed to their deaths upon the Moon, and the tale of his lonely flight around it are among the deathless epics of the race. Whatever may be done by us or by others after us, his achievement stands alone. And it will be he who made the rest possible.

"So, you see, we are not pioneers. We are only followers in a great tradition, hoping to tread the way of knowledge a little farther than the last man. If it is granted to us to be successful, we shall be satisfied to have been not entirely unworthy of our forerunners and of our country."

The red light flickered and the televising mechanism slowed as the studio was cut off from the world. An important looking gentleman entered. He greeted Dale and shook hands.

"Thank you," he said. "Very good of you to come at such short notice."

Dale grinned and shook his head. "No, my thanks are due to you." The other looked puzzled. "You've not seen this evening's *Banner*?" Dale went on. "They're trying to stop me. That means the *Hail* will be at it to-morrow. I was glad to get my word in first."

"Trying to stop you?"

"Yes. Don't know why. Some stunt of theirs, I suppose. Nobody's going to stop me, but they might be a bit of a nuisance if they got a big following."

"H'm. It's a wonder people don't get sick of Dithernear's stunts, but they don't seem to. Well, I'm glad you came—and I hope you are as optimistic as you sounded."

"I am—nearly," Dale admitted, as they parted.

Into the Curtance sheds where the great rocket rested in its thicket of scaffolding only the faintest ripples of popular excitement penetrated. Though Dale gave interviews freely enough to avid pressmen, he was adamant in his refusal to permit interruption in the routine of his shops, and the reception of those few journalists who attempted to enter by subterfuge was ungentle. An augmented corps of watchmen with the assistance of police dogs guarded doors behind which work went on with the same unhurried efficiency as in the days before the secret was out. The most obvious and concrete result of world-wide interest was a new shed hastily run up to accommodate Dale's swollen secretariat.

The inquest upon the intruder was reported in full detail and followed with close attention, but it failed to provide any sensational revelations, and the body remained unidentified. The chief witness gave his evidence clearly, received the congratulations of the coroner upon his narrow escape and left the court with an increased reputation for courage.

Two days later the *Chicago Emblem* announced that the dead man had been an American citizen named Forder. It indignantly demanded a closer inquiry into the circumstances, hinting that Dale might show up less well. The leader on the subject finished by truculently demanding the passage of a special bill through Congress to prevent the Keuntz Prize from going abroad.

"That's the point," Fuller said as he showed the article to Dale. "That's the Keuntz works behind this, I'll bet. They're afraid of you lifting the prize."

Dale nodded. "Looks like it. Still, it's good news in one way. It suggests that they aren't building a rocket to try for it themselves."

"I don't know." Fuller was less sanguine. "I know our reports say so, but you never can tell how much double and triple crossing is going on with these agents. It might equally well mean that they are having a shot at it and think that any rivals will be put off if there is no chance of their getting the prize."

"Well, our men haven't let us down yet. You can be sure that if they were building a space rocket anywhere we'd have heard of it somehow—just as they or somebody else seem to have heard of ours."

"Perhaps. I should say it was they, since the man you shot was an American. Anyway, they're out to get that prize—and the interest it's accumulated. Apart from the money, it'd put them back at the top of the rocket-plane industry. Their reputation's been slumping badly the last year or two, you know—for anyone else to get it would mean the end of them."

The shares of Commercial Explosives, Limited, rose for three days as if propelled by their own fuel, and then fell back to a little above normal. A heavy slump in the price of gold took everyone by surprise. The cause was traced to a rumour that spectroscopy showed the presence of gold in great quantities on Mars; the rumour was duly exploded, but gold failed to respond. This caused less surprise, the behaviour of gold being unaccountable at the best of times. The Stock Exchange betting stood at 500 to one against Dale reaching Mars, and 10,000 to one against the double journey.

A rumour that the Russians had for years been building a bigger and better rocket, to be called the *Tovaritch*, refused to be crushed until the Soviet Government issued an official denial of such a rocket's existence or even contemplation. Rumours of German, American and Japanese rival rockets were less hardy. The pastime of guessing the names of Dale's companions attained the status of a national game.

Meanwhile the work on the Curtance rocket went steadily forward throughout the summer. Dale was too busy to feel anything save an anxiety that his ship should be finished to schedule by the middle of September—certainly too busy to feel lonely because his wife had gone to his mother's home.

For Mary had given in. She had dropped her opposition and released him from his promise, but she had been unable to stand the sense of restlessness pervading the house. She had fled to the quiet Dorset countryside where only an occasional gyrocurt with its white sails whirling as it sauntered along amid summer clouds reminded her of the reign of machines.

It would not be long now. Poor baby, what a world to come into. She hoped it would be a boy. This was a man's world, women walked unhappily and fearfully among its gears and flywheels, making shift with dreams and snatching what little joy was spared them. The machines were the hateful dictators of men and women alike. Only men could be so dense as to think that they themselves were the rulers. . . .

The few hardy souls who had elected to spend the night upon the open inhospitality of Salisbury Plain slept no later than dawn upon the morning of the twelfth of October, 1981, for it was with the first rays of sunlight that the influx which would last all day began.

The hysterical ballyhoo timed to reach its climax upon this day had been sustained with an unsurpassed degree of journalistic art. The birth of a son to Dale Curtance had given a fillip to interest at a convenient moment, and every newspaper reader in the country had become familiar with the, at present, somewhat dough-like features of Victor Curtance. The announcement of the names of Dale's companions for the flight had caught three unknown men and one rather more familiar figure into an undying fulguration of publicity.

Every person who could reach a radio set had seen and heard a prince of the royal blood say: "I name this ship the *Gloria Mundi*. May God guide her and bring her safely back to us," and the film of the occasion had been shown at every cinema.

The arduous feat of transporting the *Gloria Mundi* from the sheds of her birth at Kingston to a suitably desolate portion of Salisbury Plain for the take off, had been followed in detail with critical attention. The discovery by an advance guard that a part of the route had been tampered with and the subsequent disinterment of a case of dynamite (with detonator and wires attached) had roused indignation and speculation to feverish heats.

The assurance that Dale himself was continually guarded by two or more armed police detectives met with immense popular appreciation.

The song, "Curty, the King of the Clouds," written at the time of the first Equatorial Flight, had been revived and stood in frequency of performance second only to the National Anthem.

For the last fortnight the Press had really let itself go, and in loyal response to its efforts the public was prepared to invade the Plain on a scale perturbing to the authorities.

The first active sign of preparation in the grey light of that historic Monday was the ascent of more than a dozen small captive balloons, painted a bright yellow, and ranged in a circle about the scene of operations. Within the perimeter they marked no craft save police patrols was to be permitted at any height whatever, and it was considered likely that the five-mile circle would insure an ample margin of safety. Half a dozen police gyrocurts rose and set themselves to hover in positions strategic for the control of traffic.

The first great charaplane of the day came booming out of the west. It landed to deposit its passengers, and within five minutes had taken off again to fetch another load. Machines of every kind from the dainty flipabout to the massive gyrobus, all with the early morning sunlight glancing from brightly painted bodies beneath swirling white sails, started to float in from each quarter, and the task of directing them to their appointed parks began in earnest. Within half an hour of the first car's arrival the congested road traffic had slowed to a tedious, bottom-gear crawl.

The crowds began to pour from the 'plane-parks and car-parks, making for their enclosures, and the favoured few, for the stands. Hawkers in good voice offered silver trinkets in the form of miniature rockets, picture post cards of Dale, pictures of the

(*Continued on page* 34)

THE CAPTAIN THINKS ALOUD . . .

I SEE *through the* FOG

Every night, at ten-thirty, winter as well as summer, a steamship noses her way out of Newhaven Harbour and is swallowed in the darkness. Every night, through fog or gale or storm, she crosses safely to France, while passengers doze fitfully in cabins or saloons.

But up on the bridge the skipper stands, watchful and alert, grimly conscious of his great responsibility. What are the secret thoughts, the real feelings of this middle-aged, weather-beaten man?

Here is a glimpse into the mind of

CAPT. MUNTON

Master of the R.M.S. "Paris," as interpreted by a man who spent hours beside him on the exposed bridge during a bitterly cold night crossing.

Captain Munton served his time "in sail," has served in all kinds of ships on all the seas, and has been on the Channel service for over twenty-five years. His reflections are set down

by **J. Murray Smith**

TEN twenty-six—no, nearer twenty-seven. Get along upstairs and see what's what. Where's that oilskin, darn it?—ah, sitting on it. Close that ventilator and keep the place warm. That's better!

Twenty-eight. Another minute and the wife'll be switching off the wireless. She turns in as I go out, as she says. Best place for her, too, on a night like this, bless her.

Strikes fresh, as usual. Don't like the smell of it, though. There's fog in the air, or I'm a—looks as though they're all aboard. Number one plank's away—in good time, too. Lot of moisture on this handrail. No wind—fog, for sure. All ready here.

"Well, Mister, what do you make of it?"

H'm. That's what I think, too. Get away sharp—there'll be no time to spare later.

"Stand By."

"Cast Off!"

Dead sort of echo. Nothing stirring. Means we shan't meet much for an hour or so. Now then——

Starboard engine. "Half-speed."

Never can tell on this tide. Leave a margin—another moment or two—make sure her stern's clear. Never damaged a propeller yet. Don't want to start now. Wonder who first called it the "walloper." Just ten thirty-one. Wife'll be upstairs by now.

Port engine: "Half-speed."

Steady, now, steady—that's it, round she comes, little too fast, perhaps. Another minute and she'll have steerage way. . . . She has it—too much, in fact.

"Give him slow, Mister—'Dead Slow'!"

"Aye, aye, sir."

Take a quick glance astern—she's beginning to slew round a bit—get the perspective this way. Make sure he's noticed it.

"Watch your helm, quartermaster! She's slewing."

Daren't go out crabwise—not a boat this length, through those narrow lights. We'd be there for good. Carrying a lot of water with us, but straight enough now.

Good. Very good. Clean through the middle.

"All right now, Trooper. Half-speed."

Just a moment to work out the course.

"Full speed, Mr. Hill. Tell the Chief Engineer to open her right out—we shall want some time in hand if it comes in thick later."

Let me see, now. Tide Table—here we are. Full flood tide. Allow three degrees for it. No wind to allow for. Magnetic course, twenty-seven East. Deviation two degrees East—that's twenty-nine. Allow three for tide—twenty-six. Where's that chief officer of mine . . .?

"Here you are, Mister. Course—South twenty-six East. Got that, quartermaster?"

"South twenty-six East, sir."

Ah, they're good lads, both. Must have heard Trooper reporting back a course a good many times, now. Let me see, ten—no, eleven—years together. He's sound all right. Think that lad of mine'll grow up the same, though he does prefer the engine-room. Wonder if he's going rabbiting to-morrow—like to be with him. Glad he likes open-air things . . . and the sea . . . after all, he might have wanted a shore job, and then——

Bit of a swell on. Seemed more than likely at first. Means fog, for sure. Kind of cold, this, that gets at your bones. Ought to see Beachy Head light by now. Can't see it, though.

"See the Head light yet, Mister?"

"Not yet, sir!"

Watch for that gleam on the water. Here it comes. Expected it a half-minute too soon. There's the light, now, showing round the point. Seems clear enough, too. Still think there's fog ahead, though. Take another sniff to make sure—yes, that's fog, all right.

What's that?

"Light on the starboard bow, sir."

What'll that be, now? Probably someone running for London river—get 'em like that on this tide. If they miss it there's a ten-hour wait.

"Where is he, Mister? Fine or broad?"

Fine, eh. Coming up, eh.

"Get a bearing on him, Mr. Smith."

Better to make sure. Leave nothing to chance this weather. Deceptive, that's what it is. Don't think this fellow will mean deviating at all, though. What? Dropping him? Good.

There's the old Head light falling away astern. Well on our course by now. Just take a turn across the bridge and back. That fellow was nearer than we thought at first. It'll come in muzzy, later. We're going to have a job.

Not a soul on deck. Thought it would be too much, even for any of the regulars. Think even Trooper feels it to-night, the way he shifts his feet. Wouldn't mind being at home in bed myself, anyway.

What are we doing? H'm—twenty-two knots. Shan't be too late if it keeps clear for a couple of hours.

Ting!

Engine Room telephone. Mr. Smith'll take the message. What's that? What time should he make Dieppe. Huh! Mister Engineer probably doesn't know we're going to run into fog. We'll be lucky to make it by two o'clock.

"Tell him, Mister, to go all out—that's all."

One thing about oil, you *can* regulate your speed exactly. Let me see, now—visibility. Calculate this to be, say, a mile—not more.

"Note for the Log, Mister. Ready?"

"Midnight. Fair. No Wind. Visibility—one mile. Speed, twenty-two knots."

Light on the port bow, eh?

Ah, yes, there he is. Take a look through the glasses—darn it, who's been using these things! All out of focus—no, they're not mine. Thought not.

"Where're my glasses, Mister—oh, thank you. What's that—fisherman, is he? Let me see, now—ah, yes, so he is. Long way out for a Frenchman. That means there'll be the whole darn fleet about fifteen miles off Dieppe."

One thing you can count on with fishermen—they're always well lit. Good idea to carry lights when you're fishing in a cockleshell. Can't afford to get run down. Too much like the cyclist and the motor coach.

Only ever had one collision. What a night that was! Can see that great jib boom coming around our bridge now. Let me see, that would be pre-War. Second mate, then—'bout twenty-five years ago. Carried away the whole shoot. What a crash, too!

Always held there was no need for the German to beach his ship, though. Threw her away, that's what he did—thought she couldn't stand a scrape with our steel-work. Why, there was many a wooden

Captain Munton's R.M.S. *Paris*. Every night, through fog, gale or storm she crosses . . .

Zoom ! "Confound this fog. It's thicker than ever. Anything might loom up out of this stuff, curse it." Zoom !

Captain Munton. On the Channel Service for 25 years.

boat that could have sunk an iron ship—not that she'd want to, perhaps. Hullo, here it is, thick as gravy.

"Not too good, Mister. About half a mile? Yes, I think so, too. Double look-outs, Mr. Hill, and put her half-speed."

What's that? Thought I heard a horn.

"Hear that, Mister?"

Yes, a long way off, no doubt—away there on the port beam. Listen for him again—there, now—can't pick up any light. *Again.* Fainter that time. We're dropping him.

"Keep that whistle going, Mister, just to make sure."

Z-o-o-m . . .

Comforting sound on a muzzy night.

Z-o-o-m . . .

"Slow, Mr. Smith !"

Visibility's getting worse, much worse, now. Can't be more than two ships' length. Good job we got that time in hand while it was clear.

"Keep her blowing, Mister."

Z-o-o-m . . .

Now listen for the answer. Not a sound—or is that—yes, there it was. Very distant, though . . .

Daresay most of them have settled down in the saloon, by now . . . confound this fog . . . nothing to upset *them*, anyway. Wonder what the match was like—expect most of them crossed for that—knew they must have lost by the quiet way they came aboard. Forgot to listen in to the commentary. Still, needed the nap more.

There's Trooper sneezing again. Proper fog-meter, he is. Never sneezes until it gets really thick—and doesn't stop until it clears.

Hullo—thought that was another horn. Thicker than ever. Anything might loom up out of this stuff, curse it !

"Get that, Mister? Yes, where was it? Look-out says 'starb'd' does he? Quiet, now. Stop her, Mr. Smith. Look-outs for'ard there, keep your ears open !"

Z-o-o . . .

Yes, that's starboard all right.

"Keep that whistle going, Mister !"

Z-O-O-M . . .

Now we know where we are. He's passing astern. "Slow ahead !"

Visibility better now—there's his light—going fast, too. Yes, about half a mile. Right. "Half-speed, Mister." Running for London river, sure enough. Why on earth do fogs and tides come together ! Bad enough crossing the ditch this weather, without all these maniacs blowing their valves out to save a few hours. . . .

"Keep her on her course, quartermaster, and watch your steering."

This is when I like to think of the wife safely tucked away in bed, on a night like this. Glad it was clear on the home coast—she won't worry, unless the fog-horns wake her. The lad's at home, anyway. Daresay he's still sitting up with those books and blue-prints of his. He'll make a grand engineer, from what the principal told me. Maybe that's best for him—though it would have been . . .

Hullo, what are those two listening for? Know they're listening, when they stand like that. . . . Starboard? That's strange. I didn't hear anything.

"Hear it, Mister? Port bow, you say. Look-out says starboard. Quiet, then. Listen again."

Don't like this. We all usually agree in a moment. Perhaps there are two of them, converging.

Z-o-o . . .

Yes, there it is, very faint, on the port.

What's that—starboard?

"I made it to port, Mister. We can't both be right. *Stop the engines.*"

Engine-room telegraph . . . Stand By . . . STOP.

"Right, Mister. Now blow up."

Z-O-O-M . . .

Good noise, that. There it goes, right the way out where the light can't penetrate. . . . And there's the answer —on the port bow.

"Where do you make it now, Mister?"

No doubt of it now—fine on the port bow. All right as long as we *know*.

"Slow ahead, then, Mister. Going to make us a few minutes late, unless it clears."

Expect they're all sitting up down in the saloon and wondering what on earth's the matter with us . . . just slowing down for signals, as the steward says.

B-r-r.

Cold, to-night—damp and cold. Hullo, what luck ! It's clearing.

"What's that, Mister? Yes, I think so, too—about two miles. Full speed, please, and tell the Chief to shape her up !"

Thank heaven I've a good man down below—makes a difference . . . this clear may be only temporary . . .

Little coffee might help. . . .

Ah, here it is. No sooner thought of, than . . .

"Yes, put it there, thank you."

Thought as much. Scalding, as usual. Not like the wife makes, of course, but good enough. The time that Trooper put his hand in it—last Tuesday, no Wednesday. Ha, that was funny. He even stopped sneezing for half an hour—as foggy as this it was, that night.

Let me see, what's on to-morrow? Oh, of course—the Old Master Mariners' Dinner, in Brighton. Pity, not being there. Worst of the night service. Still, this is only for the duration. Be glad when pension-time comes—not that it's good to think of leaving the old girl—she's a good ship and a kindly one.

What's that? No—it's not a light. Just a reflection. Still . . .

The fishing fleet may be out somewhere here. All right if it keeps clear.

What about Dieppe, now. May have to go in on the fog-horn—should see the harbour lights with luck, though. May be a degree or two off our course, after stopping the engines. Have "Sparks" get through about it.

"Take a message for the radio room, Mister. Dieppe. 'Request D.F. Bearing and weather.' That's all."

Another few minutes and we'll know where we are exactly. Flood tide—likely to carry us to the left, anyway. Allow for that. What was it—had to be remembered—ah, those cranes ! Yes, of course, those cranes.

"When the radio room reports our bearing, Mister, have him ask the people at Dieppe to move those cranes from alongside. We'll be right up out of the water to-night, and if they're too close we'll push them over."

Wonder why they never think of keeping the cranes out of the way until we're alongside? Funny thing, that.

Here's the bearing—now, what is it——

H'm. Two degrees left and slight haze. With a flood tide carrying us across, that should just level things up.

"All right, quartermaster. As she goes."

"As she goes, sir."

Aye, there she goes. It's good to feel her under you, on a night like this. That coffee seems to have done some good. . . .

It seems to be keeping clear. Should be able to pick up the harbour lights, though it may be thick at the piers.

Z-O-O-M . . .

Be in before long, now—all being well.

Yes, that's a fisherman, away to starb'd.

Who'd be a fisherman on a night like this ! Still, I suppose they like it.

There are Dieppe lights—the beacon, up on the hill. Should say we're dead between the two of them.

"Watch your helm, quartermaster. Give them a blow, Mister."

Z-O-O-M . . .

Here they come, up on deck already. All looking sleepy, as usual. What's the time? Just two. Not so bad, though we won't be alongside for five minutes. Proper bottle-neck, this is. . . .

Let her come round . . . gently . . .

Get over to the starboard telegraph.

"Half-speed."

Half it is. Not carrying too much water, even though it is narrow. Those cranes—ah, they've been moved all right. My word, we're higher to-night than we've been for months.

"Slow !"

Slow it is. In she comes. Steady, now. Stop the port engine. Stop starboard. May bump a little with this tide. Give them a yell down there. In she comes.

"*Stand by with a fender there!*"

There's the train waiting. Usual crowd on the quay. And there's old Godin—haven't seen him for weeks. He must have been on day duty. Glad to see him.

"*Moi? Pas mal, pas mal. Moi? Pourquoi pas? Au bar, alors, en dix minutes.*"

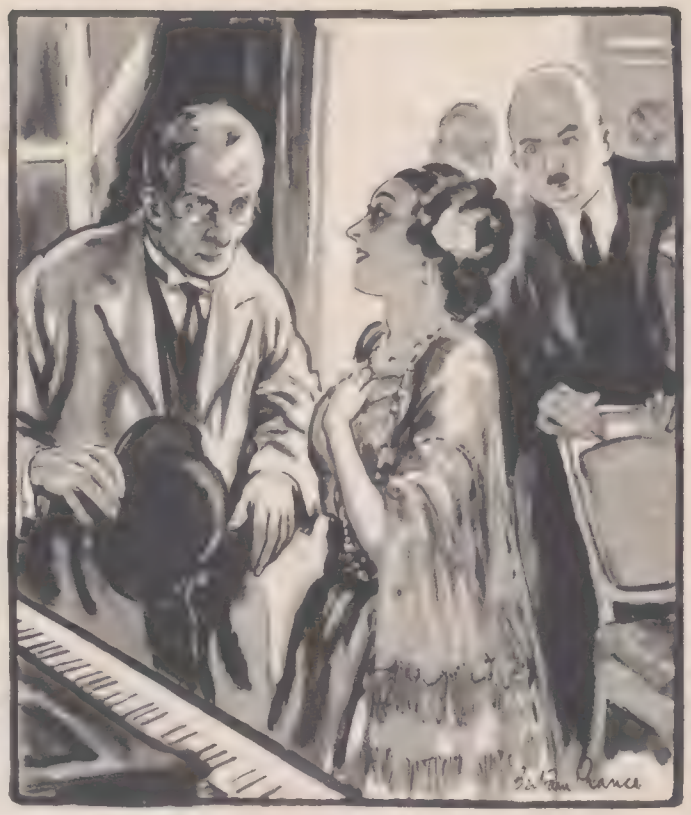
One thing I do like about this side, you can get a drink at two in the morning. There they go, then, over the planks and straight into the bars.

Well, that's that. Get down and have a rum and milk with old Godin, as usual. It'll certainly do me good on a night like this !

"*Oui, je viens, je viens . . .*"

Short Short Story
by
Barré Lyndon
Illustrated by Bertram Prance

Famine Prices



They brought Madame Terzani to reason with him.

"BOILING jam is an art," said Bert. "That's why they pay me nine quid a week."

He drained his glass, looking sideways at Mr. Briggs.

"Anybody can tune a pianner, if they got the ear," Bert added.

"Yes," agreed Mr. Briggs, and his voice was a little shaky as he went on. "But nine pounds a week is a lot of money."

"Jam boilers is rare," Bert told him. "They have to pay famine prices for blokes like me!"

Mr. Briggs drank the remainder of his tonic water, and set his glass on the bar.

"Does it take long to learn?" he asked.

"There's secrets in it," Bert answered shortly.

He eased himself off the bar as if he were afraid of giving the secrets away, nodded and then walked out, his stained apron swinging. Mr. Briggs followed and watched Bert stride across the street, rolling his shirt-sleeves higher. He kicked open a door in a wall, vanishing into the rich-smelling mystery of the jam factory opposite the "Royal George."

Mr. Briggs walked slowly away, carrying his little bag, thinking of Bert and his nine pounds a week. Around a corner he came in sight of the Thames, beyond the wharves of the Southwark shore, and saw a dilapidated building which had *RAMBOLD—Pianos and Instruments* massively lettered along the front.

Mr. Briggs went down a passage into which drifted the odour of new wood and polishes. His knees felt weak, and they were weaker still when he found himself in Mr. Rambold's office. At a desk beneath a window that looked down to the river was Mr. Rambold, a little man who was no bigger than Mr. Briggs.

"I'm sorry we've got to let you go, but there isn't enough work for you now," he said. "We can't keep more than one first-class man."

"What about the Regency Hall concert?" Mr. Briggs asked.

"We've sent up a Borgstein," Mr. Rambold said. "Not your type of piano. Sorry. Of course, we'll send for you when we can."

Mr. Briggs walked out again, but he did not go directly to the street. He went to where a grand piano stood under a special shroud, and looked at walnut fashioned from trees which had been cut down a century before. He touched the Oberhoffer Grand, strung by the hand of a master who had given two years of his life to the building of the instrument. Mr. Briggs had spent all his life learning to bring such things to exquisite tune.

It was eleven o'clock the following morning when Mr. Briggs slipped through the stage door of the great Regency Hall, passing chaste bills which announced Mme. Terzani's recital; the bare announcement had been sufficient to sell every seat in the house long before her arrival in England.

Mr. Briggs saw Mme. Terzani standing in the lights, holding a red rose in her hands as she sang. About the edge of the empty stage stood her manager, agents, secretaries, friends, cleaners, and anybody who had been able to creep in, passing their judgment on a voice which the rest of Europe had agreed was matchless.

The piano quivered to silence. The voice pealed on a note which made Mr. Briggs quiver also, because he had an ear for such things. There was echoing applause, which stopped as Mme. Terzani turned.

"Is it me—or what?" she asked. "There's something wrong!"

Her startled eyes were dark now that she had turned away from the lights.

"There's no flow—no music!" she said. "What the hell is the matter?"

The manager, agents, secretaries, and friends clustered hurriedly around, assuring her that all was well.

"I'll have a rest and try presently," she said. "It may be nerves."

She passed close to Mr. Briggs. She was dark, and alive with something that the others lacked. Her skin seemed almost to glow, and when she went by Mr. Briggs the air became softly warm. He waited unnoticed for a while, then he slipped towards the dressing-rooms. It was easy to tell which belonged to Mme. Terzani, because of the flowers in the passage outside. He tapped on the door, and pushed it open.

The room was large. A girl was going quietly through a pile of letters. Mme. Terzani sat in an armchair, reading music as some people read a book.

"Excuse me," said Mr. Briggs.

His fingers were trembling and his knees were weak again, but he was not afraid of her.

"It's the piano. I don't mean that it's out of tune," Mr. Briggs said. "It isn't the right one."

Mme. Terzani put down her music. Eyes that were friendly surveyed the little man.

"When you sang in Prague, for the first time, you had an Oberhoffer Grand," Mr. Briggs said. "They had another for you in Berlin. You sing best to an Oberhoffer, because it suits your voice—and it brings you luck, Madame."

He stood with his hat in his hands.

"Madame, it's the piano that's wrong," he insisted. "Only an Oberhoffer is mellow enough for you."

She was quiet for what seemed a long while.

"Is there an Oberhoffer in London?" she asked.

"At Rambolds."

"I'll get it," she told him. "Thank you."

She stood up. Mr. Briggs felt the touch of her hand and their glances met while she smiled gently.

"You are very kind," she said. "You understand me, don't you? Thank you, again."

A 'bus carried Mr. Briggs away. When he alighted, he almost ran past the jam factory towards the Thames and Mr. Rambold's office.

"Mme. Terzani wants the Oberhoffer, Mr. Rambold," he said. "Will you let me tune it for her?"

"The Oberhoffer?" Mr. Rambold came out of his chair. "Only Rachmann or Vilnar could tune it to her satisfaction, Briggs—I'll get one of them."

Mr. Briggs did not protest. He went out again, and waited in the street until a dozen men began to take the Oberhoffer out to a lorry.

When the lorry left he walked to the "Royal George," and found Bert there.

"Does it cost much to learn to boil jam?" Mr. Briggs asked.

"You being an old friend, I'd put you in the way of it for twenty quid," Bert said. "You've got the right touch. Ten weeks with me, and you could start earning money."

"At famine prices?" Mr. Briggs asked.

"Very nigh," said Bert, and he chuckled.

When they parted, Mr. Briggs did not go home, largely because he had not told his wife that Mr. Rambold could not keep him on. He walked, doing a little sum in his head.

"Ten weeks learning—three pounds a week—that's thirty," he calculated. "And twenty for Bert, that's fifty pounds."

He thought this out while he wandered about the Southwark wharves, listening to the ripple of water against the piles, which was a sound that he could imitate on an Oberhoffer Grand.

In the middle of the afternoon he went to the Regency Hall, and the stage doorkeeper leaped from his cubby hole when he saw him.

"They've been trying to find you!" he said.

"Who?" asked Mr. Briggs.

"Everybody!" said the man.

Mr. Briggs came from a cold stone corridor on to the stage. Two of Rambold's men were trying to tune the Oberhoffer Grand, everything about the hall stilled and quiet while they did it.

Mr. Rambold stood by, worried and anxious. The manager and agents and secretaries were still there, but the friends had gone. Mr. Rambold was the first to see Mr. Briggs, and he shouted to the men on the Oberhoffer.

"Stop!" he called, then came across the stage with relief on his face.

"Thank goodness you've turned up," he said. "Rachmann is down with influenza and——"

"And Vilnar died three weeks ago, I know," Mr. Briggs said.

"We're counting on you to tune the instrument now," Mr. Rambold told him, while he waved his hand and almost bowed Mr. Briggs towards the Oberhoffer.

Mr. Briggs did not move. He knew that he was the only man in London with the touch and the knowledge which could make this old instrument give its true melody.

"You don't employ me any more," he said.

"I'll pay you a special fee—five guineas," Mr. Rambold smiled.

"Fifty guineas," said Mr. Briggs. "Famine prices."

Mr. Rambold stood aghast. He told Mr. Briggs that he could go—and then called him back. The manager, the agents and the secretaries argued. They brought Mme. Terzani to reason with him.

"Will you please tune it for me?" she asked, and her friendly voice was like music from the old Oberhoffer's strings.

"Yes, madame—for fifty guineas," said Mr. Briggs. "They won't pay me to tune pianos any more. The Oberhoffer will be the last."

"He'll make me a success to-night," she told her manager. "There's more music in him than in the whole damn bunch of you. Clear everybody off and keep quiet—and give him what he asks."

When Mr. Briggs ran his fingers along the yellow keys, his touch was like that of a woman drawing her fingers through a child's fair hair. For a long time Mme. Terzani remained by him, trilling sometimes at the chords he struck.

Bert and Mr. Briggs stood at the back of the Royal Circle, looking down to where Mme. Terzani was bathed in light, holding a red rose against her silver gown, singing to the great Oberhoffer that Mr. Briggs had tuned.

Bert listened in silence. Mr. Briggs listened with one hand resting over Mr. Rambold's cheque for fifty guineas, and he was silent, too.

In the notes of the Oberhoffer there was a human quality which blended with the voice of the woman, rising and merging so that there was no longer a century-old piano and Mme. Terzani, but a single instrument giving music that had an ecstatic quality which made Mr. Briggs tremble, and held Bert immobile.

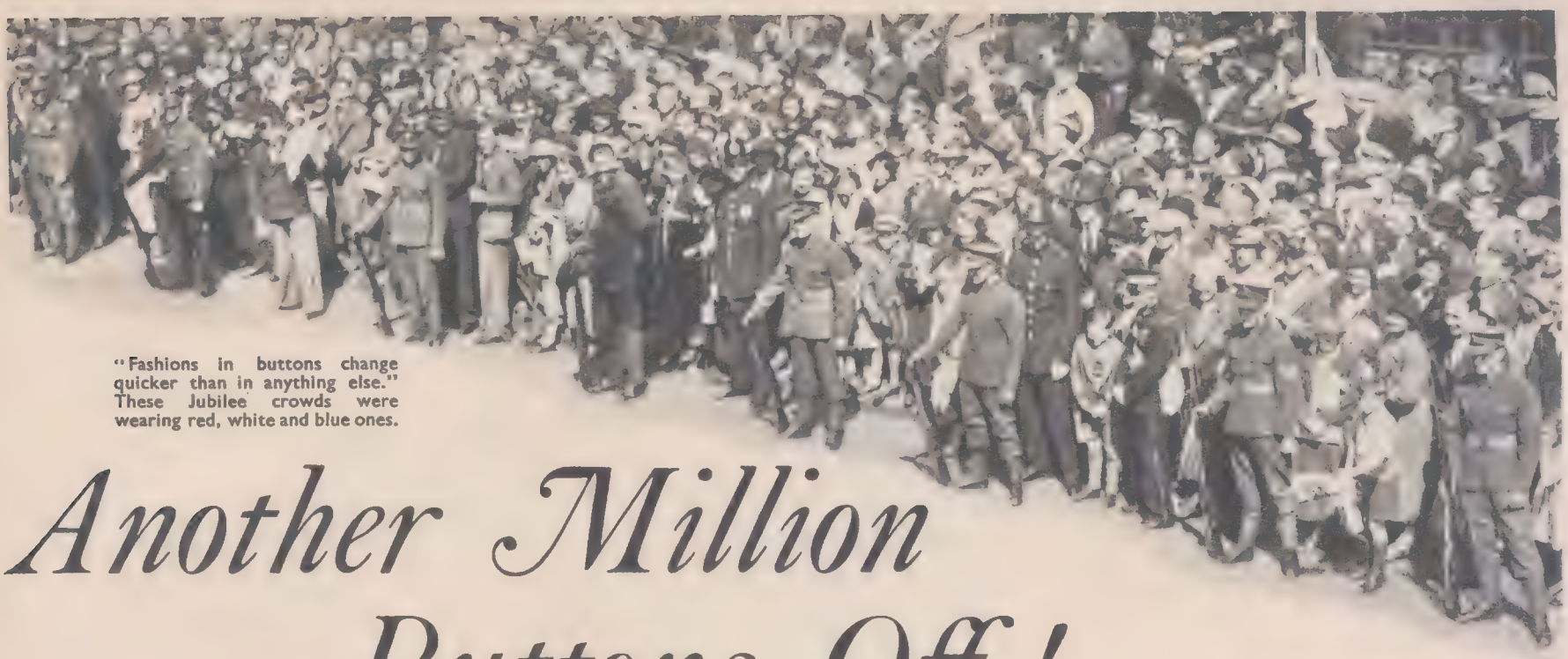
"Never heard anything like that!" Bert yelled through a frenzy of applause. "That's a good pianner, mate. I always said you'd got—touch!"

"I start with you on Monday morning," Mr. Briggs reminded him.

"You'll do all right," Bert assured him.

He looked to Mme. Terzani, bowing in a circle of light.

"You're artistic and so'm I—and so's she!" Bert said. "I wonder if she's ever tried boiling jam?"



"Fashions in buttons change quicker than in anything else." These Jubilee crowds were wearing red, white and blue ones.

Another Million Buttons Off!

by L. G. BRANSON

YOU are not the only sufferer. Every day approximately a million buttons come off in Great Britain. They must do to account for the fantastic totals of the national button production.

All the buttons produced here last year thrown together in a single great heap would be a staggering sight. One firm alone turns out a million every fortnight. And they are no longer severely practical and nothing more, mind you, but definitely ornamental as well. People even collect them. Mrs. Browne of Kansas City, for instance, has an astonishing collection of over 18,000 different kinds.

The chief of one of the oldest concerns in it told me a lot about this business of putting British buttons on the map.

"I suppose," he said, "you're hoping to hear that buttons are made from tigers' teeth and elephants' toenails. Well, they *are* sometimes. Sharks' teeth, too. But most of them began as milk. That's the source of casein, you know. In fact, the only difference between a button and a piece of cheese is one of treatment."

Casein, incidentally, was discovered by accident. Or so the story goes. A cat running loose in a laboratory upset a beaker of formaldehyde over some cheese.

Surprised, not to say annoyed, the chemist watched his lunch rapidly become a peculiar-looking hard substance. But that hard substance was the first of the plastic materials which nowadays are turned into all manner of things from teacups to a suite of furniture.

"Fashions in buttons change quicker than in anything else," remarked this expert. "Some that were designed only a couple of weeks ago may be out of date to-day. Which is why we're always on the search for unusual materials and fresh ideas."

A special staff of designers spends the whole of its time thinking out new sorts of buttons. Any important show or event must be met by a crop of topical brain-waves from this department. During the Jubilee, for example, red, white and blue buttons were all the rage.

Before that there was the run on "Marina green." A particular shade of red favoured by the Duchess of Gloucester became known as "Kenya red" and for a time buttons of that colour enjoyed a tremendous vogue. More recently the Chinese Art Exhibition turned madam's attention towards dragons and queer inscriptions.

I saw more buttons in an hour here than seemed credible. In every colour of the rainbow. Of every imaginable shape and size. Round ones, oblong ones, square, oval and odd-shaped ones. Particularly attractive were some made half of wood and half of a crystalline substance which commenced life as carbolic acid.

These people rather specialise in novel materials. Natural wood is one. Agents all over the world send it to them. They showed me buttons cut from a slice of palm-tree and from pines that once grew on the Gold Coast. Sweet-scented cherry-wood, too, is used.

"Uncommonly pleasing grain, don't you think?" they asked. "As a matter of fact, it's caused by some sort of disease in the wood."

That plastic material (obtainable in something like a thousand varied shades) can be magiced into an extraordinarily faithful imitation of no end of natural substances. Things such as bamboo, horn, elephant hide and lizard skin. There were samples which might easily have been real onyx and green jade—but weren't. Mighty hard to believe that beneath the surface all of them are the same stuff precisely, you may take it from me.

"It's astonishing what people will wear to be different," grinned an executive. "Often in our line the more hideous things are the better they sell. So long as there is a certain something about them, you know. What price this, for instance?"

And he produced a wooden buckle fashioned in the form of a colossal black beetle.

"Handsome little fellow, isn't he? And we've got some pretty good spiders as well. However that's by the way. Come and watch the wheels go round."

Judging by the prodigious din, the wheels were doing nicely, thank you. Overalled men and girls fed a battery of ever-hungry machines. First, a saw-toothed monster bit the sheets of raw material into rough discs. Then they were whisked away for a spot of high-speed "turning."

Button Photos, Lyons, Sons & Co.

"Special shapes are done on a grindstone," bawled a voice in my ear. "Or even fret-cut if it happens to be particularly intricate."

We paused by a girl slipping the turned discs one by one into another machine. That mechanical genius did the rest. It shot them out at the far end plus a lot of lines and four neat holes.

Other painstaking robots were just punching holes, no more. But how cleverly they twisted the buttons round and round to do it.

"Still look rather flat and uninteresting, don't they?" remarked my guide. "These polishers, though, will make short work of that."

"They will!" I murmured, as the dull, lozenge-like affairs became transformed in the twinkling of an eye into buttons bright as a new pin. Curiously, the actual polishing medium is only innumerable thicknesses of linen packed together. Quite soft to the touch—but not when whirling round at goodness knows how many revolutions a minute.

The casein base, of course, is really white. Other colours are dyed on. But when it comes to two (or more)—colour schemes the job has to be finished off by hand.

So you find a squad of skilled girl artists deftly wielding minute brushes. Men, too, are working here with queer-shaped implements. Hand-engravers, I learnt, busy on the more exclusive stuff. True craftsmanship, this.

"Our annual output is simply enormous," another official said. "We get orders for thousands of gross at a time—and for single buttons. Manufacturers often ask us to design specially for their fabrics. And we are proud to have made buttons for the royal family."

Incidentally, nearly all the buttons for men's clothing are made (believe it or not!) from nuts. "Vegetable ivory," people in the know call it. Visualise a brazil about twice life-size and you have a sound idea of what these chaps look like.

So common are these nuts in the south tropics, by the by, that they were originally used as ballast.

They make buttons, besides, of ivory, steel, copper, silver and brass.

Glass as well; softened by terrific heat and pressed into moulds. Indeed, there is precious little that has not been turned into buttons at one time or another. Birmingham is the great production centre for metal buttons; punched out in their tens of millions.

On the other hand, the "pearly kings'" buttons are no longer produced in this country at all. Japanese pearl buttons sell in Leeds at 1½d. a gross, you see. And trade regulations require a British manufacturer to pay his workers 2½d. a gross to sew them on the cards alone.

Romance has a place in the story of buttons. Maybe you read recently about the Hon. Moya Beresford's wedding.

Amongst her gifts from the bridegroom was a ring made out of an enamel and diamond button once worn by Louis XVI. It is one of several which he tore from his waistcoat and handed to a friend on the way to the guillotine. They have been treasured by the family ever since.

* * *

Well, those particular buttons chance to have been kept for many years.

But what usually happens to those millions of new ones turned out every year? Probably most of them eventually get lost. Because in spite of all the ingenuity of modern science, no one has yet invented a button that won't come off!

by JACLAND MARMUR

Rodney Hawke whipped up his blade. Morgan took three mincing steps forward.

Henry Morgan's

BEFORE the year of grace, 1665, the King's Head Tavern of Port Royal in the Jamaicas had already echoed many times to the throaty voices of lusty men. Weather-beaten by the drenching rains and the brawling winds of the Caribbees, it had long known the frenzy of men scenting the treasures of a new and little-known world.

But on the night Rodney Hawke, sailing master in trade out of the Virginias, walked glumly down the road, the King's Head Tavern was witnessing a crescending climax of excitement . . . Henry Morgan, newly appointed Admiral for the Indies, had closed his recruiting lists for a new venture against the Spaniards.

Rodney Hawke, swinging a little as most men did in those islands, from long and close association with the sea, pulled at a cheek sun-stained the colour of old mahogany, and looked across the road. He was lean and sinewy: there was no fat on him anywhere. His eyes—he was a man in the early twenties—were a little rueful, grey and clear-seeing, with a latent humour etching faint crow's-feet at the corners. He wore the side arms of a master mariner, and a doublet of dark sateen. And he stared for some moments in absent thought at the famous Inn.

Rodney Hawke crossed the road and stopped on the rim of a cluster of men who read a notice tacked to the solid wall. It was the commission of the governor, Sir Thomas Modyford, appointing Henry Morgan Admiral of Jamaican ships of war and privateers. . . . Hawke listened to the stir of excited talk that rose and fell like the buzzing of swarms of bees.

"Just got back from Campeache way down on the Mosquito Coast, that lucky Henry Morgan did," one wizened fellow was announcing shrilly to all concerned. "Got more'n a hundred-thousand Sterling, so they tell. Ransoms an' booty an' loot an' all!"

"An' they divide it themselves by the Rules of the Privateers!" another put in excitedly. "All exceptin' a fifteenth to the Crown an' a tenth to the Admiral, the Duke o' York. Lord a'mighty!"

"Where's he cruisin' for now?"

"Who knows what he'll do? Cartagena, maybe, or Puerto Velo. Bring back half a million if he does!"

Rodney Hawke turned deliberately around at that. "Puerto Velo, did you say?"

"Ay; so I did."

"Then I've a mind to go with him."

The sailor, a corporal of marines by his dress, guffawed loudly and patted the haft of his sword. "Out o' luck," he announced shortly and with a great pride. "I was the last volunteer he picked. Lists is closed."

Rodney Hawke smiled faintly. "Then you will learn soon enough, sailor, how the buccaneers take their name. Wild beef, sun-dried on wooden bucans from Tortuga, is a tough fare for a Spanish cruise. . . . I've an important engagement in Puerto Velo, and no ship to meet it in. I've a mind to sail with this Morgan."

"He has a mind, he says!" the marine bellowed scornfully. "Didn't I just finish telling you the recruiting lists are closed? Morgan's got a hellish temper when he's aroused. I know. Don't you go crossin' *him*! I saw two gunners get flung clear across the courtyard for pesterin' him to join. When he says the lists are closed—they're closed! He'll see no one."

"He will see Rodney Hawke."

"Who in blazes is Rodney Hawke?"

"I am," Hawke murmured carelessly. "And who in blazes is Henry Morgan?"

The corporal of marines backed off, his mouth agape and his eyes wide. "Who is Henry Morgan, he asks me! In Port Royal, Jamaica, he asks me who is Henry Morgan! You go an' ask 'em in New Granada or Turrialba. By the Lord! they'll tell you, those of 'em who are still alive an' able to talk."

"Bah! He was an indentured slave boy, so I hear, when first he voyaged from the Welsh coast out to the Barbadoes."

"Now you look here!" the new recruit spat out, poking a chunky thumb at Rodney's chest. "You go tell him that if you want to die right quick." He turned coldly away. "He'll slice your ears for less."

"Well, he will want a sword for that. Here!" Rodney Hawke pulled two sovereigns from his belt. "Get yourself another blade from Henry Morgan's commissar."

He pressed the coins into an astonished hand, unhooked the sword from the corporal's belt, and elbowed his way through the crowd and into the tavern. He crossed the tap-room quickly to the courtyard door where a red-faced giant stood guard with a firelock musket grounded at his feet. Before the fellow could recover from his astonishment, Rodney Hawke had brushed past him and through the door.

He found himself in a large court, the tavern walls on three sides, a heavy iron gate barring the other. Moonlight filtered down through the whispering branches of a huge bay tree hung with ranging lanthorns. Beneath this, at a table in the swinging light, three men sat talking. Two blades, unsheathed, and glittering, lay on the ground. The table itself was a litter of rum mugs, ancient mariners' charts, and scattered, hand-written lists. Two of the men were lean and hungry looking, Captains Jackman and Morris. The third was heavy set, with massive shoulders and flowing hair. He listened carefully, and said nothing. . . . Sword in hand, Rodney Hawke advanced.

"Gentlemen, I beg your pardon. I am seeking Henry Morgan."

The heavy set man turned slowly in his chair. His face, brought full into lamplight, was broad, a little fleshy, the heavy underlip tight above a little tuft of beard. A carefully tended moustache swept against his cheek. And his eyes were wide, with a piercing, sardonic quality that could at rare moments flash into unexpected and startling humour. But they were cold and hard, the ruthless eyes of Henry Morgan.

"You have found him."

The voice was rich, purposeful, with a hint of quick anger at the interruption. Hawke bowed slightly. The corners of his lips twinged.

"Sir," he went on, "I have the honour to present myself as Captain Rodney Hawke, sailing master out of the Virginias, until recently in trade with Puerto Velo and St. Jago de Cuba. Smuggling, if you wish to call it so, between the teeth of the cursed Spanish guarda costas. A recent engagement with three of them has cost me my brig."

"Well. . . .?"

"There is an important business I must attend in Puerto Velo. I know the port and the coast as well as I do the Capes of home. I offer my service."

"The recruiting lists are closed," Henry Morgan said with finality, barely parting his lips.

"So they told me outside. But——"

Morgan's stare went brittle. "I said the lists are closed! . . . How did you get in here?"

"Why, I walked."

"Then you may walk out. And quickly! One day the Crown will be forced to teach you colonists in the Virginias a lesson in decency. You are an upstarting, impudent lot."

"True." Hawke's lips twinged again, but his eyes had narrowed a little. There was no sign of mirth in them. "I must be in Puerto Velo with you. It is of utmost importance to me, sir."

"Then you may swim!" Anger blazed swiftly in Morgan's eyes, though he did not raise

ILLUSTRATED BY W. R. S. STOTT

Mate

his voice. "I warn you for the last time to leave."

"Impossible," Hawke murmured quietly. "I have heard it told that Henry Morgan is a man of great courage and swordsmanship. And I am wondering, sir, if this can possibly be true of a man who was once a Barbadoes slave boy."

"By my throat!" Henry Morgan roared, and then fell silent, glaring icily.

Jackman and Morris looked slyly at each other and then carefully set down their rum mugs. There was a moment of tense silence. Morgan's cheek went pale for an instant, then flushed. The fire went out of his eyes. Slowly he reached down and closed his fist on the hilt of a sword. He came erect deliberately, a solid, heavy man, tough as iron and cold with rage.

"Rodney Hawke," he said, "you lie. You had better admit it at once!"

"In Puerto Velo, perhaps. Not here."

"You shall never see Puerto Velo. . . . Your guard!"

Rodney Hawke whipped up his blade. Morgan took three mincing steps forward, surprisingly lithe for so heavy a man.

The blades teetered in mid-air, flicking delicate points of reflected fire against the tavern walls. Then, with astonishing rapidity, Morgan glided Rodney's steel, cut over, lunged in low seconde. It was the swift, expert attack of a skilful swordsman. Hawke cut the parry on the forte not an instant too soon and held steel, attempting no riposte.

Morgan recovered at once. He fought the blade now, delicately, carefully lifting the attack, dancing his point for an instant inside the other's guard. It scratched Hawke's neck; he felt a slow trickle of blood. He gave ground for a moment, and Morgan lunged with the speed of a striking snake. But Hawke was ready for him. He danced aside, beating off the blade, and swept for the first time into a fierce riposte of his own. The lithe swords rasped and crackled. Morgan's guard was up and out of line with the savagery of the other's onslaught. Hawke pressed in, tearing at his advantage.

A light came into Morgan's hard, cold eyes, something of surprise and a little of admiration. Jackman gasped aloud. Henry Morgan was giving ground! Hawke lunged again. Against any other swordsman it would have been the end. But Morgan, swift to recover, effected a half parry. The blades slid down, carrying Hawke off balance. In an instant Morgan was on him, beating the steel until he had it tightly bound. The sword shot from Rodney's hand. He staggered back with the force of the disarming. Helpless, he stood with his back against the tree trunk. Morgan's point was at his throat. Morgan's eyes were on him, violent, cruel, and dangerous.

"For a moment, Captain Hawke," he bit off acidly, "you had me troubled. Now then, I will tell you once more. The sight of blood, as you may have heard, does not annoy me. What do you say about the Barbadoes slave boy? You lied? Eh?"

Morgan's sword point was still at Rodney's throat. He could just feel its touch there, cold and menacing. Morgan's eyes were still on him, angry and ominous.

Rodney Hawke smiled faintly. "I will say this much, Henry Morgan," he murmured. "If they teach swordsmanship such as yours in the Windward Islands—I am a little sorry I was not a slave boy in Barbadoes myself."

For perhaps half an instant Henry Morgan's eyes continued to burn, and his deadly point continued to press the Virginian's throat. Then, suddenly and with that astonishing change of mood of which he was capable, his lip twitched and his eyes smiled. His point came away; the sword dropped to the cobbles from his hand.

"By the Lord! Captain Hawke," he growled. "You have courage." He turned carelessly away. "I give you your life. You may go."

But Rodney shook his head. "To what ship am I assigned for the expedition against Puerto Velo?"

Henry Morgan spun round on him. "So that's it, hey? You are a persistent brute, sir!"

"Very."

"You knew how hateful to me that slave boy story is that circulates all the Western Islands?"

"Of course. Who does not?"

"And you deliberately baited me with it to win a place for yourself?"

"For no other reason, sir."

Henry Morgan looked at him sharply with those cold, wide eyes. "You have more courage than I thought. I cannot offer you a master mariner's share."

"I do not sail for booty."

"Strange. Well . . . you will report at daybreak on board the *Satisfaction*."

Hawke inclined his head. "I shall be there, Admiral."

He turned, striding across the courtyard. Henry Morgan and his notorious lieutenants, the Captains Jackman and Morris, watched the Virginian disappear in the gloom beyond the dancing lanthorn light. . . .

Some days later, the buccaneering fleet of nine sail, standing south for the continent, prepared to close the coast. The sea was a deep, rich blue, the fresh trade lifting peaks of pure white as far as the cloudy horizon. The ships, the heavy-built and ungainly sailers of the time, wallowed in the swells, rolling their gun-ports down.

Not a man in the company of almost five-hundred but knew by now that the sacking of Puerto Velo was the object of the expedition. Excitement was at fever pitch. The city was one of the most important centres of Spanish strength in the new world. Its warehouses were loaded with treasure plate transported for shipment from Panama through the jungle of the Isthmus. Slave vessels from the African coast made it their focal point of trade. Its merchants were rich. And its women, so the tales told, were luscious, sloe-eyed creatures of beauty. The men stared across the empty ocean, muttering, greedy for a sight of the Papist coast.

On the flagship, where the lookout had already reported the hazy loom of land, Henry Morgan stood on the wide, squat poop in the centre of his grouped lieutenants. Rodney Hawke, leaning against the skylight, surveyed the scene in silence; a cluster of swarthy sea wolves under the blazing sun of a tropic sea, listening sullenly to their leader.

"We shall be off the mouth of the gulf by nightfall," Henry Morgan rapped out the words in a tight, harsh voice, the voice of absolute command. "We attack at once. The forts of St. Jeronimo and the Castle de Gloria must be taken. Without them in our hands the city is impregnable. The Iron Castle on the northern promontory of the gulf cannot hold its position with the city captured."

"No," growled Jackman. "But first it is necessary to sail past that Iron Fort. And aside from Cartagena, Puerto Velo is the best fortified city on the Spanish Main. We have not enough men. With only nine ships and a handful of——"

"The fewer men the greater share to each!" Morgan interrupted quickly. "Attend! The four leading vessels will engage the Iron Fort as though our greatest strength were there and as if we meant a direct assault by sea. But they will have barely sufficient men aboard to man the ships and the guns. The balance will be with the rest of the fleet under my command. I mean to come to anchor up the Guanches River and land troops there. Overland it can be marched in short order. And while you, Jackman, are busy with the Iron Fort, I shall attack the Castle de Gloria from the landward side where we are not expected. Otherwise——"

"But you *will* be expected, sir," Rodney Hawke put in carelessly.

Morgan spun on him. "Eh?" he thundered.

Hawke pointed across the sea. Far off to leeward where the twilight already gathered, an experienced eye could just make out the white feather of a disappearing sail.

"You may rely on it, Henry Morgan," he said. "That guarda costa fellow there has counted every sail of ours. He will report it to the governor long before dark. They will be waiting for you. And they will be looking for *nine* ships, not four. If you attack the Iron Fort with four sail—count on it the Spaniard will soon enough be wondering where the other five are putting in their work."

"You are well named, Hawke. You have sharp eyes. So then, if we are discovered, we must put up the better fight. What would you have, you chicken-hearted men?" he demanded. "The city in your laps on a cushion of silk? You will be smart enough with the looting and the women, if the time for it comes! What are your cutlasses for?"

"I think at times there are better things than cutlasses, Henry Morgan."

The Admiral of privateers bared his teeth at Hawke. "Name it, sir!"

Rodney smiled. "A bomb-ketch, for instance, together with five longboats, properly handled. They could do a world of good."

Morgan's eyes narrowed at this. "What's in your mind?"

"I know the gulf and the coast. There is a watering place between the two forts that guard the city. I could land a party of men there easily enough

(*Continued on page* 18)

CONTINUING

Henry Morgan's Mate

in the dark. Then if you march overland to surprise them from the west and I from the east, we have the Floria Castle pocketed."

"You could land a party of men under the very cannon of the forts? What would you do with their gunners? Bewitch them?"

"Ay. In a manner of speaking."

"How?"

"By making the Spaniard believe our entire fleet of nine sail is in the gulf, whereas in truth there will be only four undermanned ships. If they think that, they will not be wondering where you and five ships are landing troops on the bank of the Guanches to march overland and attack the fort from the landward side."

"You are a clever fellow. Go on."

"Three of the vessels must engage the Iron Fort and keep it busy. Give me the bomb-ketch, five longboats, and fifty men. You may have the rest."

Captain Jackman exploded a harsh and violent laugh of scorn. "The man's a fool!" he roared. "One bomb-ketch and fifty men to assault the strongest fort on the Spanish coast!"

Morgan waved him to silence. "And if you fail?" he asked Rodney Hawke.

"I shall lose my life: you shall lose nothing. . . . I will give you time enough to march the land troops, sir, and when you attack, I shall land my men."

The leader of the buccaneers eyed him sharply. There was a quiet assurance about the sailing master from the Virginias that appealed to Morgan's explosive nature. He was a judge of men; he rarely made an error of character. Quite suddenly he grinned broadly. It was almost a friendly grin.

"You are appointed Henry Morgan's mate for the expedition," he said shortly. "The bomb-ketch and the party are in your command. I will hoist the signals at once."

The transfer was made at sundown, the fleet hove to in sight of the Spanish coast. Five longboats lay in the water alongside Rodney Hawke's ketch. Upon these he set his men to work stepping tall spars and distributing in each half a dozen harquebuses. Captain Jackman, lolling on his poop deck, stared at the Virginian's operations with a large and undisguised scorn. He hadn't any faith at all in such nonsense. The Virginian went calmly on with his plans.

The flaming colours of sunset faded quickly into full night, except where the ocean, hissing darkly, set acres of phosphorescent fire to life. Only then did Admiral Morgan burn a signal flare from the deck of the *Satisfaction*. His five ships swung their heavy yards, sailing like grim white ghosts eastward toward the mouth of the Guanches River.

Captain Rodney Hawke, seeing the main fleet's departure, gave final orders to his men. To windward, Captain Jackman's three vessels rode the sea, waiting his order. The night was black as a cave, and as empty. Only the stars glittered in a canopy of dark velvet, and the darkness was full of the noise of the sea and the stutter of the freshening trade. The sailing master from Virginia stared wistfully to the east. There, somewhere behind that veil of night Puerto Velo lay with the ocean curling at its feet. He remained erect at the taffrail of the bomb-ketch, swinging with the movement of the little ship, the wind on his cheek, his stare fast on an invisible horizon.

Toward midnight he picked up a lantern from the deck, drew back the shutter, and deliberately raised it aloft three times above his head. There was a single answering gleam from the deck of Jackman's frigate. Hawke gave a low order. The mainsail was sheeted home. At the same time the longboats, in tow with tall masts stepped and narrow platforms rigged close to the truck of each, fell away astern of the ketch, separated from each other by ten-fathom lengths of hawser. The men charged the fore and aft brass cannon, trimmed their matches, and waited, tense and alert. Rodney Hawke took the helm himself.

He steered with great care, feeling his way by the skill and memory of many past dark voyages under the guns of the Iron Fort. In half an hour its black promontory loomed vaguely off the larboard beam. Hawke looked at it for an instant, his lips tight, reflecting. The rest of the roadstead was an open book to him, despite the blackness of the night. A horseshoe gulf into the bight of which he sailed. Presently, leaving the Iron Fort astern, he would be off the city itself—and the two main fortifications with their cannon gaping at him.

When Jackman engaged the Iron Fort, the Spaniards would see plainly enough there were three vessels there from the flames of the cannon fire. It was Hawke's purpose to convince them, when he himself opened fire, that his own strength was six sail. Then Morgan, overland, would have an uninterrupted march and a violent surprise for them. If Jackman failed to fulfil his commission, or if Morgan mired in the swamp west of Puerto Velo—he was bottled inside the bay like a rabbit in a picketed hutch.

"The Castle de Gloria, sir!"

The sailor at his side flung up his arm at the night, his eyes flaming with excitement. Rodney Hawke nodded, eased the helm over. The ketch, losing way in the feebler airs inside the gulf, drifted closer to the land. The lamps of the city winked and brillianted at him. He looked back at his five indistinct, towing longboats, tending the helm again to bring them all in line directly opposite the forts. There was something tight in his throat that he could not swallow. His cheek was cold as ice. He waited, prying the darkness with narrow eyes.

Then, from far astern at the entrance to the bay they had just negotiated, came the single deafening roar of a cannon. It was followed instantly by another. Hawke could see the bolts of flame spitting toward the land. The leading vessel of Jackman's meagre attacking fleet let go its broadside, then the next, and the next. Hawke grinned. Jackman didn't believe for an instant in the sense of the Virginian's plan, but he followed his orders! A blind man could tell from the firing that there were three vessels bombarding the Iron Fort.

"Fire," Hawke commanded quietly to the gunner at his side.

The order was passed. An instant later both brass guns of the bomb-ketch spoke. It was the signal to the longboats. Hawke gave over the helm. In the first towing boat he could just make out the dim shape of a gunner climbing the platform at the masthead, harquebus in hand. The weapon exploded with a loud roar and a tongue of fire. The men below passed reloaded weapons aloft. All down the line of boats the operation was repeated. From the land it seemed there must be six vessels lying off the forts; for the bombardment came as if from six sail drawn in line of battle.

The forts returned the fire at once. Hawke could hear the round shot whistling overhead. He grinned. The Spaniards were overshooting, training their cannon for the high decks of frigates and men-of-war, while the men in the longboats, safely low at the water, raised their apparent gun-deck fire by means of the high platforms at the mast trucks.

The night was ripped to shreds by sheets of cannon-fire and thunder. Faint, distant screaming added a shrill undertone to the battle din. Shoreward, in all the bedlam, Hawke distinguished a horde of men at the walls of the Gloria fort, black, swarming shapes beneath jets of gunfire. Then the lifting blaze of a signal fire—Morgan's announcement of arrival and attack.

Hawke pulled at once on the signal halyard to the leading boat. It pulled alongside. The crew of the bomb-ketch scrambled aboard. Before following, Hawke put a lighted match to a fuse prepared at the hatch combing. The longboats, casting off the tow lines, pulled quickly for the shore.

Astern of them the bomb-ketch, mined for the purpose, exploded with a deafening roar, hurling itself high in the air, rocket-like, a splintered mass of flying sparks. What remained of it took fire. The Spaniards, believing they had sent a man-of-war to the bottom, sent up a wild screaming of victory. It was short lived. Henry Morgan was within the walls of the Gloria fort. San Jeronimo was cut off, isolated and helpless. Jackman came sailing abeam of it, his forward ordnance roaring for surrender. And under cover of the confusion, Rodney Hawke landed his men and attacked the Spaniard in the rear with pike and cutlass.

Pocketed by Morgan's completely unexpected march overland, both forts struck their colours toward morning of that day. It was on the Prado within the walls of the Gloria Castle, with the sun sending its first spear of crimson above the eastern hills, that Rodney Hawke found Henry Morgan prepared to send terms of surrender and ransom to the governor of Puerto Velo. The buccaneer was black with gunpowder. His clothes were in shreds. But he bellowed an oath of welcome at the Virginian's approach at the head of his men.

"By the Lord!" he cried, "I am glad you are alive."

"Your terms!" Hawke demanded tightly. "Are they sent?"

Morgan grinned. "A ransom of a hundred thousand pieces-of-eight for the city alone. They can pay it easily enough. You need not worry, Hawke. On my word, you shall have a full captain's share for your work to-night."

The Virginian shook his head. "It is not enough."

Morgan spun on him, roaring. "What? You ungrateful——"

"You may keep your captain's share of ransom and loot. I do not want it." Morgan scowled fiercely, his brows a line of thunder. Hawke went on without flinching. "In all of Puerto Velo there is one thing I demand as my share of the expedition. And I shall have it! On the Camino Real, sir, there is a house of mossy stone known as the Casa Escomada. That house I demand to be guarded by a troop of men of my own choice. It——"

"So that's it, hey? You had your eye on a privately hidden treasure of plate. By my teeth! it accounts for your anxiety to get to Puerto Velo with Henry Morgan. Impossible!" Morgan roared. "Whatever treasure is found belongs to all the men at once! I warn you I will tolerate no tricks. You shall have your just share—and no more!"

Hawke stepped up. "I know the temper of your men, and I know what will happen—as you do—once they are unleashed in the squares of Puerto Velo, sir. You can settle that with your own conscience. But I warn you that——"

"You warn *me* . . .?" Morgan's eyes went icy.

"Ay! In that house lives a girl called Lola de Escomada. And I demand, sir, absolute safety for her and a guarded passage to the Virginias!"

Morgan's hand had flown to his side where his sword hilt showed. Between Hawke and Morgan there was a moment of absolute silence. Then, suddenly, the hand of the leader of Port Royal buccaneers dropped from his sabre hilt and he lifted back his head and roared his laughter. And as suddenly it stopped.

"And that," he demanded, "is the reason you sailed with Henry Morgan up to the eyes of death? To win safety for a Spanish wench?"

"The wench," Hawke replied hotly, "is a lady of blood. Further, sir, she is to be Madame Rodney Hawke!"

"I'm sorry, Hawke," Morgan conceded with quick generosity. He coughed, went on hoarsely: "Your demand is a part of my terms. On Henry Morgan's word. Whatever else may be said of me, my promises are valid. More! I will march myself at the head of a troop and see the order of safety fulfilled." He spun on his heel. "Corporal! A troop of fifteen men. At once!"

They set off, Henry Morgan and the Virginian at their head. And as they passed within the gates of Puerto Velo the buccaneer scowled.

"Look here, Hawke," he wanted to know. "How can you shoot cannon from a longboat? I myself, marching to the fort across that damned swamp, counted six vessels in your command, each one bombarding the castle. By heaven! it would have fooled me, too, if I had not known it impossible."

"There were no cannon, Morgan, save those on board the ketch. The longboats were firing harquebuses, raised to a ship's height by masthead platforms. I had the harquebuses fitted with wide bell-mouths at the muzzles and charged with all the powder I dared without bursting them, to make a loud noise—and flame enough to be mistaken for cannon. . . This, Henry Morgan, is the house."

Morgan looked at him. The Virginia sailing master's face was alight, his head back, his sword point lifted in salute. Morgan raised his eyes. He saw a girl's face framed in a leaded window, where the sunfire fashioned a golden aura of her hair.

"You have the better of us, Captain Hawke. You've a treasure greater than anything Henry Morgan shall ever win. . . . Corporal!" he ordered. "You are in charge of these fifteen men. Understand this! On pain of torture and death, no one is permitted to molest this house, or to enter it without Captain Hawke's consent. Not even myself!"

At the name, the marine gaped at Rodney Hawke with sagging jaw, recognising him for the first time.

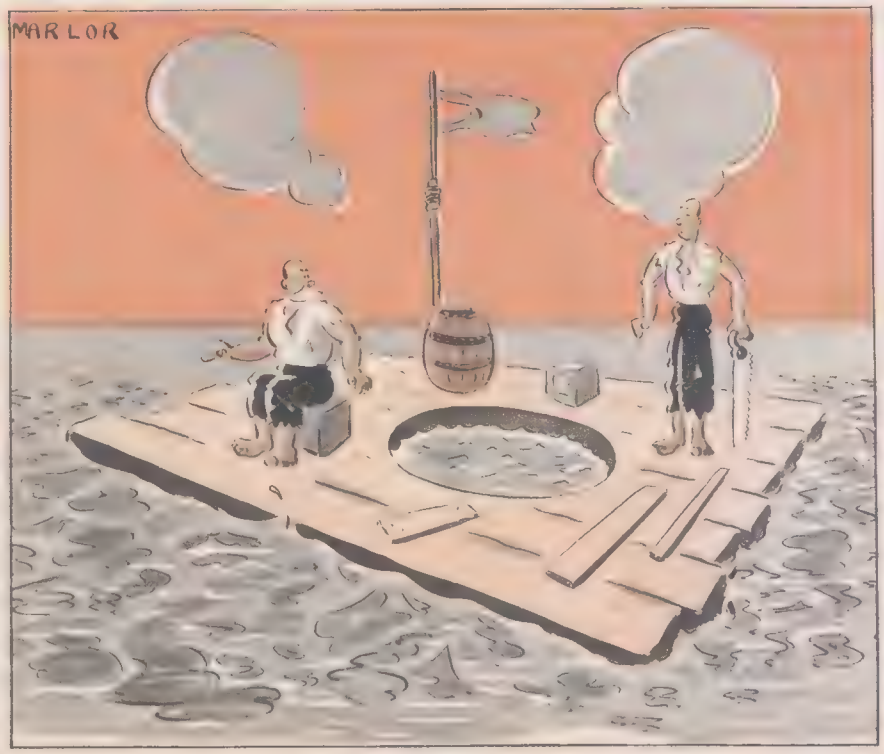
It was that same corporal who had warned the Virginian against Henry Morgan's temper before the doors of the King's Head Tavern in the Jamaicas.

But Henry Morgan did not know this. For he turned away abruptly, striding down the cobbled road with his sabre clanking at his side.

Laughter

The "PASSING SHOW" Smile Section

"Quick! Put it away, the boss is coming!"



"Your bath is ready, sir."

"Not as good as the last Dutch bulbs we ordered."

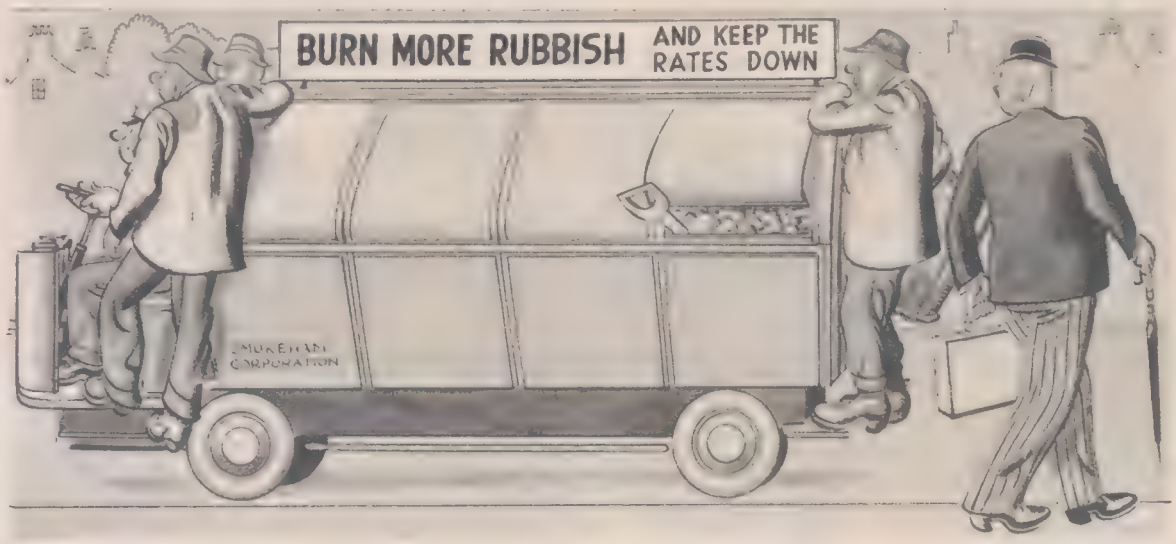
"Can't beat these new windows in wet weather, Willie."

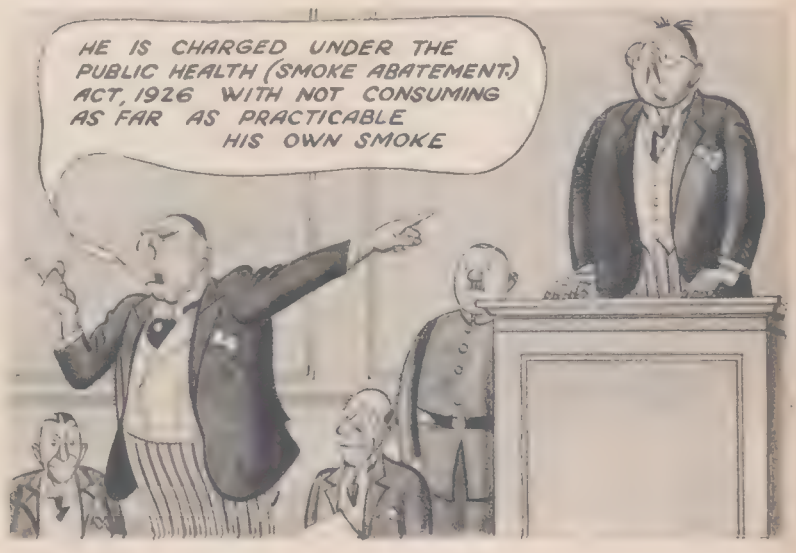
"Who the blazes hung this mirror here ?"

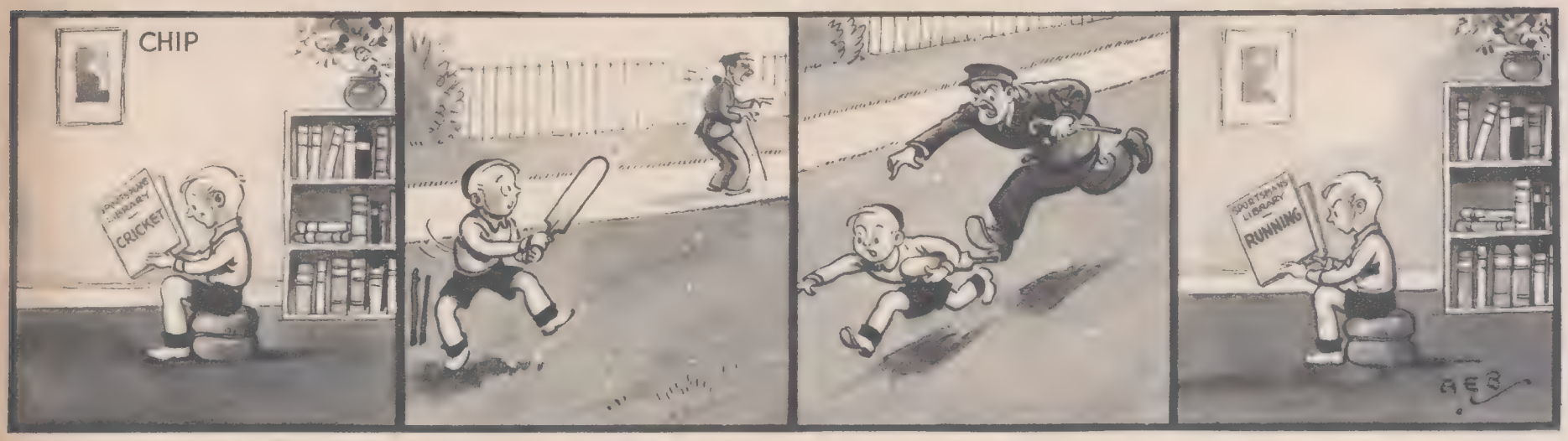
"Yes, madam, I'm awfully sorry about your tablecloth. We've just discovered one of our laundrymen used to be a paper-tearer."

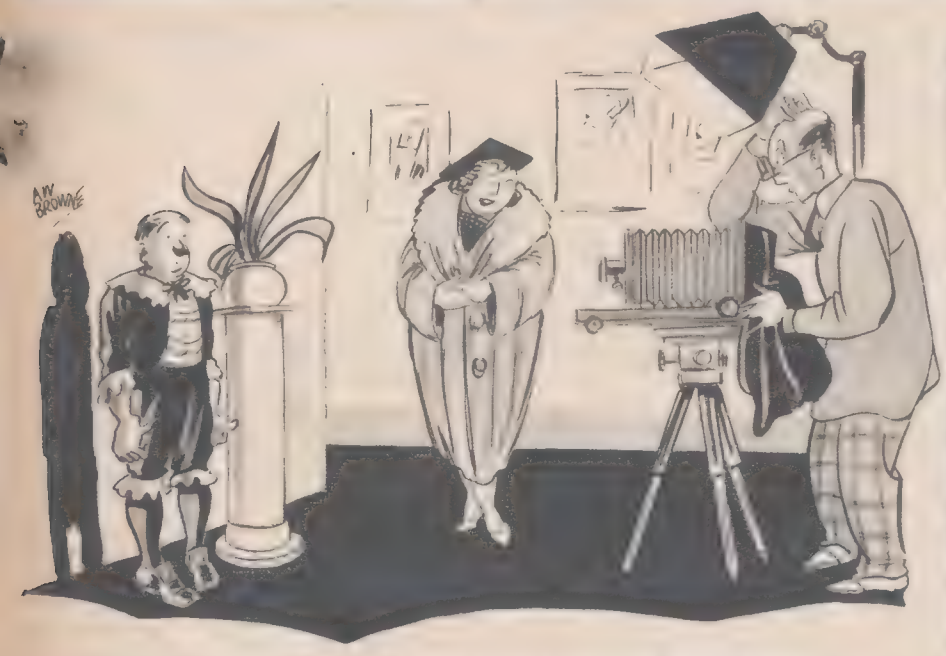
A MAN AND HIS RUBBISH

by A. C. BARRETT



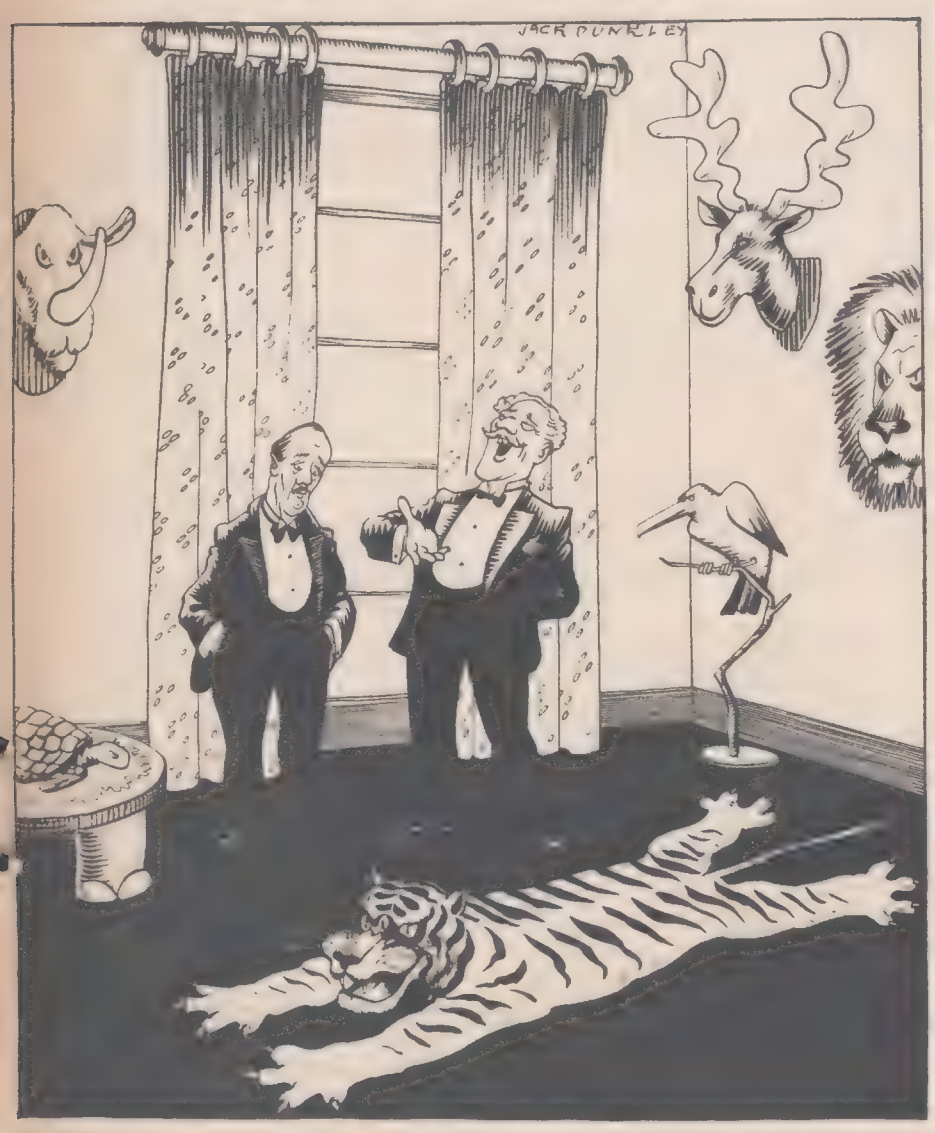






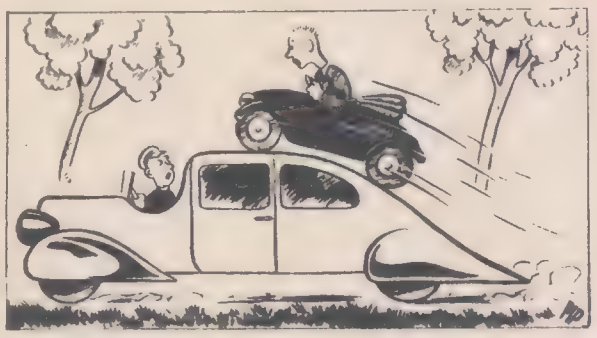
"We've lost my husband's baby picture from the family album."

"You must be on the wrong 'plane, sir—that's the Taj Mahal, not the Crystal Palace."



"You can still see the sneer on his face when he thought I had missed him."

LAUGH WITH THE WORLD

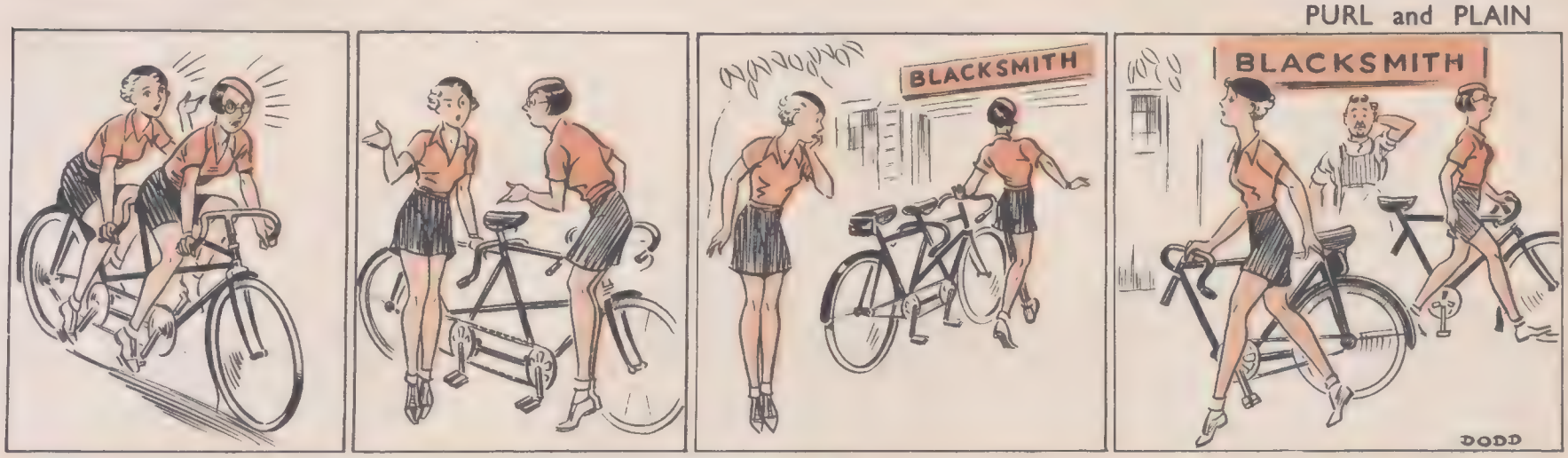


"Pardon me, I thought it was a hill."
Deutsche Illustrierte, Berlin.

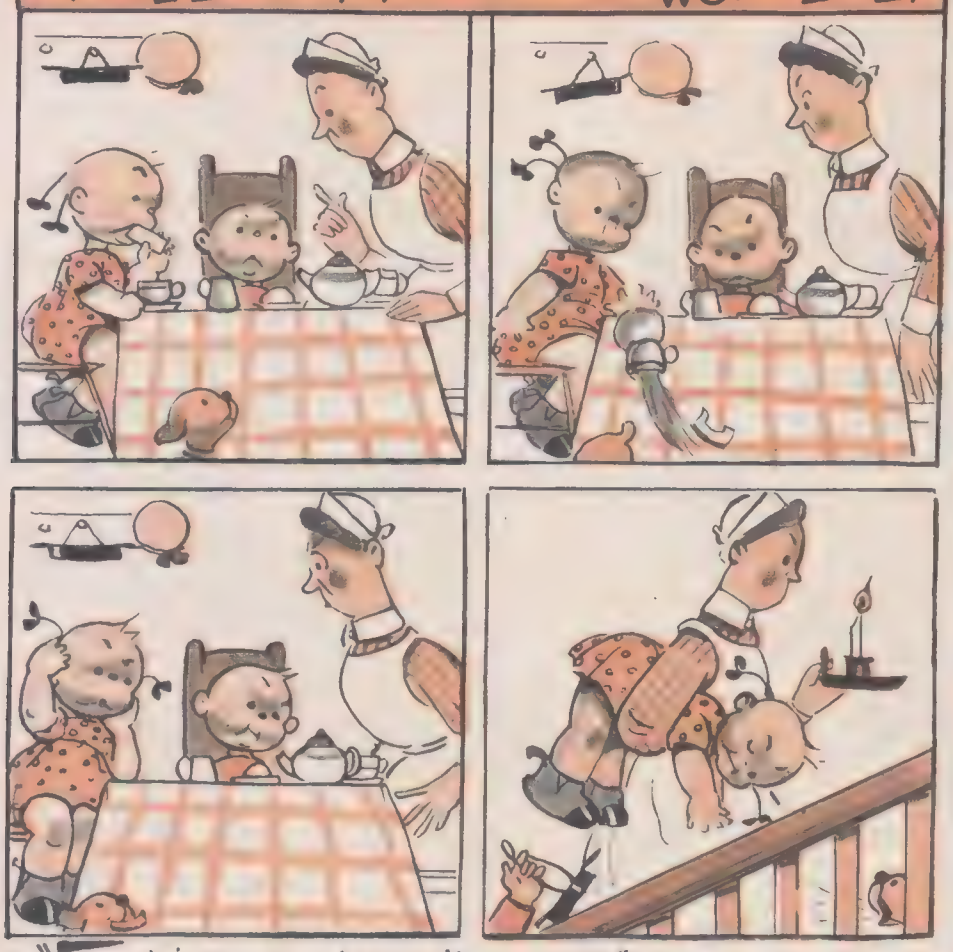
Irate Neighbour: "There are five of your children up my apple tree."
Mother: "I wonder where Willie can be, then."
Smith's Weekly, Sydney.

"I got five years for robbing the Chicago Bank. And you?"
"I got ten years for founding it."
Das Illustrierte Blatt, Frankfurt.

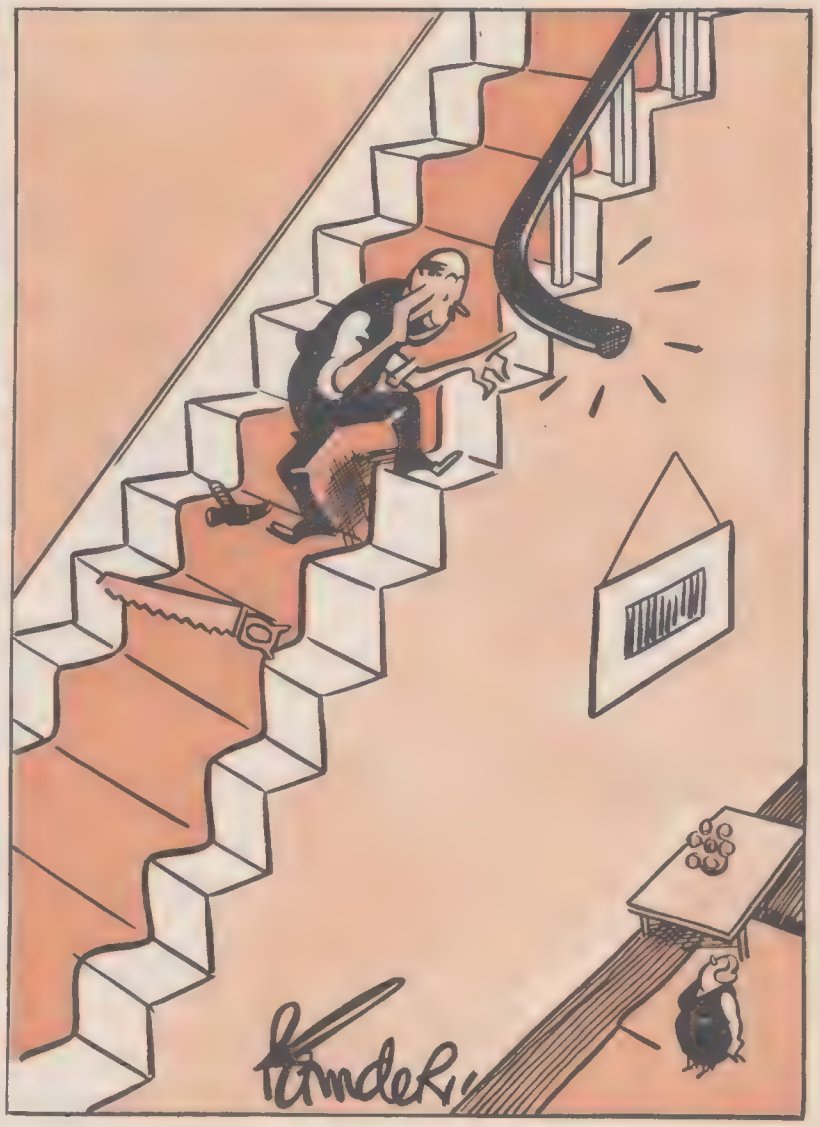
PURL and PLAIN



MABEL LUCIE ATTWELL says "WOT A LIFE!"



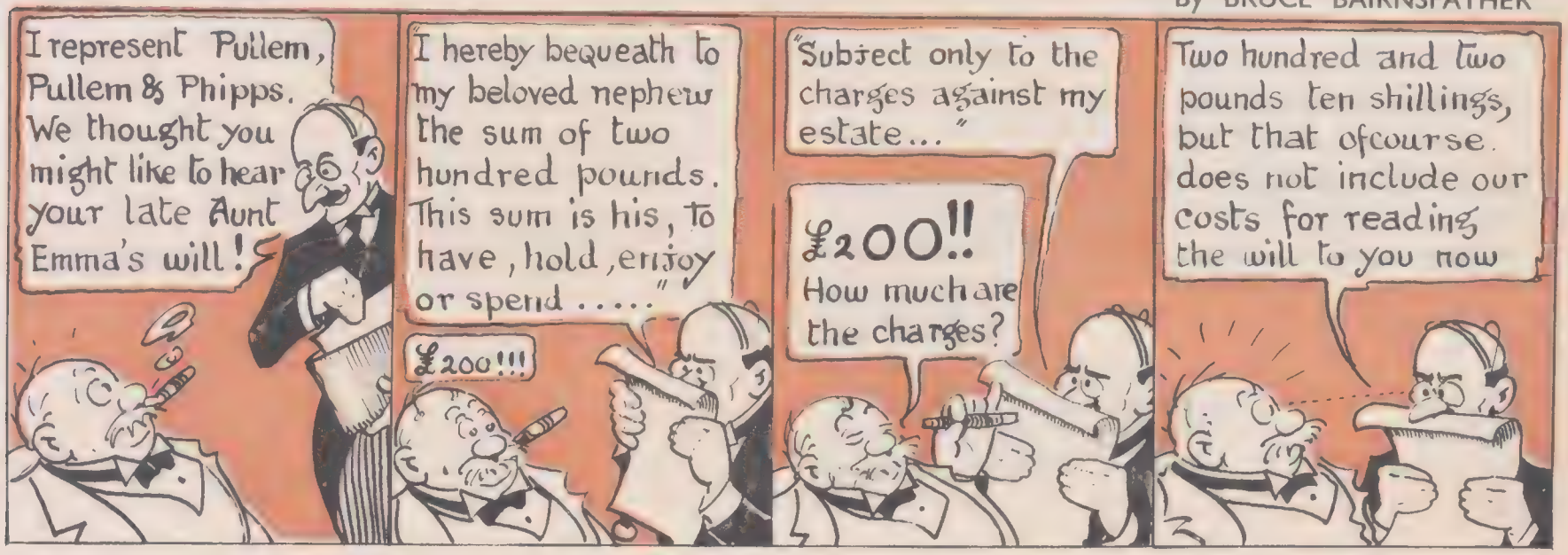
"This having to say it so much" says nurse
"I really don't think there's anything worse!"
"There is" says me - an' right well I knew it -
"It's jolly well worse to listen to it!"



"That ought to cure Johnnie of sliding down the banisters!"

OLD BILL and BERT

By BRUCE BAIRNSFATHER



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A Molly O'Rourke Story

by FRANK KING

The Ungrammatical Clue

IT was not often that Detective-Inspector Pomeroy had so good an excuse for visiting the Royal Edward Hospital. He called frequently enough without any excuse, but this time he was definitely on duty. And because of this, his pleasant homely face did not wear its usual expression of delighted anticipation.

Nevertheless, after a word with the porter, he walked straight along the corridor to the Almoner's office.

The girl working at the big desk looked up with a smile as he entered.

"Hello, Pom-Pom!" she cried. "What are you doing here?"

"Business, Molly."

Molly O'Rourke was very young to occupy her important and arduous position. With her flaming auburn hair and her deceptively innocent blue eyes, she looked even less than her twenty-seven years. Yet no one ever suggested that the Royal Edward Hospital could have a better Almoner.

"What's the trouble?" she asked.

"Remember Dicky Freer?"

"Yes. What about him?"

"He was arrested early this morning."

"Oh, Pom-Pom!" Quick sympathy shone in Molly's eyes. Dicky Freer was one of the inspector's protégés, a real limb of Satan, but a most engaging young rascal. He had spent six weeks in the hospital with a gangrenous appendix. During this time both Molly and Pomeroy had worked on him, trying to persuade him to abandon his life of crime. On his discharge, he had assured them that he was cured both physically and morally, and had every intention of going straight in future. They had believed him. And Molly knew how disappointed her friend must be to bring such news.

"What's he been doing?"

"Burglary's the charge. But—well, I'm not so sure about it myself."

"Tell me."

"He was seen about two this morning, coming out of the garden of a house in Hampstead. He acted queerly; and the constable, suspicious, took him back to the house. Here it was found that a pantry window had been forced and the place burgled. The safe had been opened and a very valuable collection of precious stones removed from it. The constable, of course, brought Dicky to the nearest police station, where he was immediately charged.

"I saw him an hour or two later. He strongly denied that he'd ever been inside the house. He told me he was walking along this quiet side-road when he saw a man climb over the garden wall. Like a fool, he decided to follow, instead of informing the police. And for his folly, he was knocked out with a sandbag which kept him unconscious for a couple of hours or so."

"That doesn't sound very convincing, does it?" asked Molly doubtfully. "Had he a bruise on his head?"

"No. A sandbag, of course, doesn't leave a bruise, so that means nothing either way. It's a pretty weak story. All the same, he seemed very much in earnest and I feel inclined to believe him. There's another point in his favour, too. So far as I'm aware, Dicky never knew a thing about safes. And this had been opened by an expert. In fact, from the way that it had been done, I could have sworn that I knew the burglar."

"The thing's simple, then. All you have to do is to find this man and——"

"That thought did occur to me," smiled Pomeroy with gentle sarcasm. "And I had enquiries made at once. I discovered that the gentleman in question was knocked down by a motor-lorry in Whitechapel at about the same time as Dicky Freer was being arrested. He was brought here."

"What's his name?" asked Molly, picking up the list of admissions.

"Henry Warton."

"Yes. Here he is. On the 'dangerously ill' list, Pom-Pom."

"Shall I be able to have a word with him?"

"I doubt it. But come along. We'll see."

They went on to the ward where Henry Warton lay in a bed shielded by screens. The sister in charge shook her head at Molly's question.

"He's still unconscious, Miss O'Rourke. Shall I let you know if he comes round?"

"If?"

"Doctor Forest thinks there isn't much chance for him."

"All right, thank you. Sorry, Pom-Pom."

"I'm sorry, too." Pomeroy fingered his small moustache thoughtfully as they walked back along the corridors. "I feel so sure he opened that safe."

"But he's got an alibi, hasn't he? If he was knocked down in Whitechapel?"

"Oh, there was plenty of time for him to get from Hampstead."

"Wouldn't he have had the stuff on him? The jewels, I mean. And tools of some sort?"

"My idea is that he'd dumped them somewhere just before the accident."

"If he dies, then, it'll make things awkward for Dicky Freer?"

"It certainly will—unless we can find the stolen stuff. I know where Warton lives. I'd better get off and make a few enquiries. You might let me know, Molly, if he does come round."

"I will," she promised.

She watched him go with a tender smile playing round her red lips, then returned to her office.

In the bustle of her work she soon forgot all about Mr. Henry Warton. It was late in the afternoon when the ward sister rang her up.

"I think number six is coming round, Miss O'Rourke. You asked me to let you know."

"Yes, thanks. I'll come along straight away."

A nurse was busy behind the screens which shielded Henry Warton's bed. Molly slipped through an opening and stood looking down at the heavily bandaged figure. Only the man's mouth, hard and cruel, was visible.

"Is he any better, nurse?" she enquired after a moment.

"I'm afraid not, Miss O'Rourke." The nurse administered more oxygen. "He's sinking fast. But often cases like this have a few lucid moments before death."

Molly leaned over the bed and whispered into the bandages.

"Mr. Warton. Can you hear me? Mr. Warton."

A deep sigh came from the discoloured lips. A moment later they moved as though forming speech. Molly leaned lower to listen.

"Tell Blinky . . ." The words were barely audible. "Tell Blinky . . . I wants to—to see him."

"Yes, I'll tell him," said Molly. "I want to ask you something, Mr. Warton. I'm sure you won't want an innocent person to suffer for anything you've done, will you?"

No reply came from the still figure.

"Please, Mr. Warton!"

Again a long shuddering sigh. A slight tremor shook the bed. Molly turned away. She knew without the whisper from the nurse that Henry Warton was dead.

Blinky's hand flashed through the air. Something caught her head a terrific blow.

As she passed out of the ward, a man sitting on a stool in the corridor rose to his feet.

"Please, ma'am," he asked awkwardly. "How is he?"

"Who?"

"Harry Warton. You've just been seein' him, haven't you? I've been waiting here an hour, but they won't let me go near."

Molly studied the man with disfavour. He was undersized, with a thin rat-like face, and watery eyes which blinked rapidly.

"Are you a relative?" she asked.

"No. Just a friend, ma'am. His best pal."

"Oh!" Molly realised the significance of the winking eyes. "Are you Blinky?"

"That's me, ma'am. That's what he always called me. Me real name's Porter —Herbert Porter."

"I see." Molly softened. She didn't like the look of this man at all, but evidently there must be more about him than was apparent, for Henry Warton's last thoughts had been of him. "I'm sorry to tell you, Mr. Porter, that your friend has just died."

"Gawd'! And they wouldn't let me see him!"

"He was unconscious practically to the end. He wouldn't have known you."

"Couldn't he talk at all?"

"He spoke a few words just before he died. He was thinking of you, Mr. Porter. He said he wanted to see you."

"And you never told me!" The man's voice rose angrily.

"I didn't know you were here," said Molly rather sharply. "Even if I had, there wouldn't have been time to fetch you. He died at once."

"I'm sorry, ma'am. I didn't mean to be—rude. But we were such good pals and—what did he say about me, ma'am?"

"Just what I've told you."

"You—you couldn't give me the exact words, could you?"

"He said 'Tell Blinky I want to see him.'"

"You're sure of that?"

"Yes. At least—well, he said 'wants' instead of want."

"Thankee, ma'am." A curious expression flickered across the rat-like face, a look that was almost one of triumph springing up in the beady eyes. "Thankee kindly. Well, I'd have liked to see him, but if he's gone, it's no use me waitin'. Good evenin', ma'am."

"Good evening," said Molly.

She watched the man hurry along the corridor, then slowly made her way back to her office. She rang up Scotland Yard, and in a moment was speaking to Detective-Inspector Pomeroy.

"I'm sorry, Pom-Pom," she said. "Warton died a few minutes ago."

"Without recovering consciousness?"

"He had a moment just before the end. I tried to get him to talk, but it was no good. He simply muttered that he wanted to see a friend, then passed out. Rotten hard luck, isn't it?"

"It is, rather. I've not been able to pick up any more information about him. Dicky Freer still sticks to his story, but I'm afraid he'll get it in the neck now."

"I wish we knew for sure, Pom-Pom."

"So do I. But now that Warton's gone, there'll be precious little chance of proving that he did it—even if he did."

"Unless you can discover the loot."

"Yes. And I don't see much hope of that. If I'm right about him dumping it somewhere before he was knocked down —well, he's taken the secret of the hiding place to the grave with him." Pom-Pom sighed. "Sometimes I wish I was anything but a cop."

"You're thinking about Dicky, aren't you? I know. If he gets sentenced for something he hasn't done, that'll put an end to all his good resolutions."

"I'm afraid so. Look here, Molly. Will you have a spot of tea with me?"

"Why not?"

"Oh, good! I need cheering up a bit. Shall I call round for you?"

"All right. I'll wait."

It was not long before they were sitting over muffins in a cosy little café. Molly knew that Pomeroy was worried, and did

(*Continued on page* 26)

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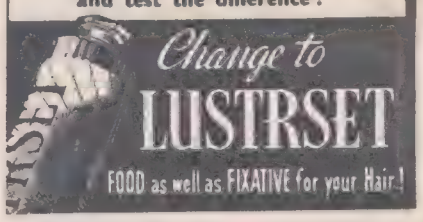

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Continuing The Ungrammatical Clue

her best to cheer him. But the sight of an evening paper which another customer was reading brought a frown back to his pleasant face.

"I wish Warton had lived," he muttered suddenly. "The more I think about that safe, the surer I get that he could have told us something."

"It's no use worrying about that now, Pom-Pom."

"No." He looked at her thoughtfully. "I suppose that friend he wanted to see couldn't tell us anything? Who was it?"

"A man named Herbert Porter. Warton called him Blinky."

"Gosh! I know him. He's a dirty little rotter, if ever there was one."

"I didn't like the look of him myself," admitted Molly.

"You saw him?"

"Yes. He was waiting there, hoping to see Warton. They wouldn't let him, of course."

"You spoke to him?"

"I told him his friend had died."

"I wonder what he was after. He's not the sort who would be there out of pure friendship. By Jove! I wonder—"

"What, Pom-Pom?"

"If he was in with Warton in this burglary, and wanted to find out where the loot had been planted."

"If so, he didn't get to know. At least——" Molly broke off abruptly, staring thoughtfully at her companion. She had just remembered the curious change that had come over Herbert Porter's rat-like face when she repeated Henry Warton's last words.

"What did Warton say, Molly?" asked Pomeroy eagerly.

"He said 'Tell Blinky I want to see him.' No, he didn't! Pom-Pom, I believe—Yes, it must be so! I thought it was just bad grammar, but . . . he actually said, 'Tell Blinky I wants to see him.' And there's a difference, isn't there? The 'I' doesn't refer to himself. It refers to someone else."

"You've got it, Molly!" It was Pomeroy's turn to grow excited. "You've solved the problem. I'll bet a quid I stands for Ikey, otherwise Isaacstein. Yes, it must be. He's a fence—a receiver of stolen property, you know. And he lives down in Whitechapel, too—not far from the place where Warton was knocked down."

"Then you think Warton was trying to tell Blinky where to go for his share of the loot?"

"Looks very much like it. I guess I'll call in and have a word with Mr. Isaacstein."

"Yes, come on. Let's go!"

"You can't come with me."

"Can't I? You just try to stop me!"

Molly's blue eyes were dancing now. Pomeroy sighed.

"All right," he said. "But if anyone gets to know, I'll be for it."

They took a taxi down to Whitechapel, alighting a little distance away from Mr. Isaacstein's address.

As they walked along a dirty ill-lit street, an idea occurred to Molly.

"Look here, Pom-Pom! Are you sure this man will be in?"

"It's perhaps rather early for him yet. He's a night bird, you know."

"Do you suppose he'll tell you anything—I mean, if he's a fence himself, he won't want——"

"He won't want," said Pomeroy grimly. "But before I've finished with him I think he will."

"Well, listen. Suppose I see him instead of you?"

"What do you mean?"

"I think I could manage to get the truth out of him quite quickly. Then I'd call for you and—well, it would be done."

"I can't let you go in there alone."

"Why not? He won't be dangerous will he?"

"No, but——"

"Just leave it to me. I'll get the truth out of him quicker than you would."

"What is this idea of yours?"

"I shan't tell you—until I know whether it works. Now, not another word, Pom-Pom. It's settled."

Inspector Pomeroy sighed again. He was like wax in this girl's hands—and knew it. They walked on in silence.

The house where Mr. Isaacstein carried on his business was a curious little place, hardly more than a cottage, wedged in between two warehouses in a cul-de-sac. No light showed anywhere in it.

"He's not in," said Molly, disappointed.

"We'll have to wait. What about the doorway of that warehouse over there? It's dark enough. We'll see him as he goes in."

They crossed the street and disappeared into the blackness of the doorway.

"What I can't understand," said Molly, after a while, "is why you allow him to carry on. If you know he's a fence, why don't you arrest him?"

"Knowing a thing and proving it are two different matters," explained Pomeroy. "He's a very astute gentleman. Once we can get the goods on him, we'll arrest him right enough."

They were silent again. Before long, footsteps sounded in the deserted street. They saw someone approaching Isaacstein's place and heard a key grate in the lock. A moment later a light sprang up in one of the rooms, and the blind was pulled down.

Molly flitted across the street like a shadow and disappeared in the darkness. For a moment Pomeroy saw her figure silhouetted against the blind. Then he heard her knock.

Her pulses were beating more quickly than usual as she waited. After a short delay, the door was opened an inch or two and a voice said:

"Who is it?"

"I want to see Mr. Isaacstein."

"Who is it?" repeated the voice.

"I've come from Henry Warton."

"Oh!" A chain rattled and the door opened a little wider. "Come in."

Molly obeyed, passing into the darkness of a little passage. The door closed behind her and a bolt shot home. Then a hand seized her arm, urging her towards a doorway through which a thin streak of light streamed.

Not until she had entered the room, a dirty, untidy place, with a desk and a few chairs, did she see anything of the man who had admitted her. He was fat, with cunning little pig-like eyes set in the broad expanse of his face.

"Who are you, my dear?" he asked.

"I'm Nell Roberts," said Molly.

"I've never heard of you."

"Didn't Harry tell you?"

"Tell me what?"

"Never mind. If he kept it quiet, I might as well do the same. I suppose you are Mr. Isaacstein?"

"I am."

"Well, Harry died this evening."

"I'm sorry to hear that, my dear."

"So am I. He—he was a good sort." Molly was watching the man closely. "Just before he died, he told me to come to you."

"Now I wonder why he did that, my dear?"

"Has Blinky been to see you yet?"

"Blinky?"

"Yes, you know him. He was in with Harry on that Hampstead job."

A quiver ran across Mr. Isaacstein's fleshy face.

"I really don't know what you're talking about, my dear."

"Oh, well!" Molly half rose from her chair. "If you're going to double cross him, I guess I'd better go to the cops."

"Sit down, my dear, sit down. Tell me more about this. What did Harry say to you?"

"He told me that he'd left the proceeds of that Hampstead job with you. He said that Blinky had a fifty-fifty split coming to him, and that I'd to have his share. Hasn't Blinky been yet?"

"No." Mr. Isaacstein's manner changed. "It's a pity about Harry. Were you with him when he died?"

"Yes."

"He didn't—give anything away?"

"Not he."

"Good. Then we can talk turkey now. I wonder why Harry never mentioned you?"

Molly felt a thrill of excitement. It seemed evident that Isaacstein had accepted her.

"Oh, I dunno," she replied. "He wasn't a guy who talked much."

"You're right. That's why I was always comfortable dealing with him. Well, it'll be a while yet, of course, before I can get rid of that stuff." The fat man smiled greasily. "Don't talk about double-crossing again, will you? You must see that I had to make sure who you were."

"Yes, I see. It'll be all right then—about my share, I mean?"

"Sure! As I say, I can't tell you yet how much it will be. But if you're wanting a little to go on with——" Isaacstein broke off as a knock sounded on the house door. "Excuse me a minute."

He waddled out of the room and opened the door. Molly heard a whispered conversation taking place. Then he returned, bringing with him Mr. Herbert Porter.

The small beady eyes blinked rapidly at sight of Molly.

"Gawd!" cried Mr. Porter. "What's she doin' here?"

"Harry sent her, of course," said Isaacstein. "Why shouldn't he?"

"He didn't! Or if he did, he was blowin' the gaff."

Isaacstein closed the door and locked it.

"What do you mean?" he asked. "She's his girl, isn't she?"

"Not she," replied Blinky. "She's a nurse or somethin' in the hospital."

"Oh!" said Isaacstein. "Oh!"

Molly looked round in dismay. She was trapped. Her theory had proved correct, but it looked as though she'd have trouble in getting out of here.

Isaacstein advanced towards her threateningly.

"Let's have it," he said venomously. "Come clean."

"Blinky doesn't know——" she began.

"Come clean, I said!" He caught her arm, twisting it behind her back. "Who's sent you here?"

"I've told you. Harry wanted—— Oh, you beast! Let me go!"

"If you don't tell me the truth, I'll break this arm of yours."

"Very well. You shall have the truth. The police know all about you. They're waiting outside to——"

A loud knock on the door interrupted. Isaacstein looked sharply at Blinky.

"See anyone when you came in?" he snapped.

"No."

"Looks as though she's right. We can't risk being caught here. Yes, give her the sandbag."

Isaacstein suddenly released Molly. Before she had time to move, Blinky's hand flashed through the air. Something caught her head a terrific blow. The room vanished in a blaze of light. Then black oblivion swept down on her. . . .

The next thing she remembered was Detective-Inspector Pomeroy's arms around her, his face very close to hers, whispering words that she could not understand. In a little while, her brain cleared and she smiled at him.

Intense relief showed on his worried features.

"Are you all right, Molly?" he gasped.

"I—I think so." She looked round the empty room. "What about Isaacstein and——"

"We've got 'em all right—thanks to you."

"You were right, Pom-Pom. Henry Warton did do that burglary."

"I know. Isaacstein had the stuff on him when we caught him."

"Oh, isn't that splendid? You're pretty wonderful, Pom-Pom. How did you do it?"

"Well, I felt uneasy after you'd gone in. I didn't know what your scheme was, and—well, I didn't like the idea of it at all. I thought I'd be on the safe side in case anything happened. There's a call box at the end of the street, and I got through to the nearest police station, asking them to send a few men along. As soon as I got back, I saw Blinky Porter coming to the house. That didn't improve matters, either. So when the boys arrived, I posted some of them at the back, and broke in at the front. Blinky and Isaacstein tried to slip out the back way, but we nobbled 'em."

"And have they confessed?"

"They couldn't very well do anything else when they'd actually got the stolen jewellery on them."

"Then Dicky Freer will be all right?"

"Yes."

"Isn't that fine?" cried Molly.

"It is," agreed Pomeroy. His voice lowered to the faintest of whispers. "Not half so fine as you, though!"

Molly did not hear his words. But she saw something in his eyes that brought a flush to her cheeks.

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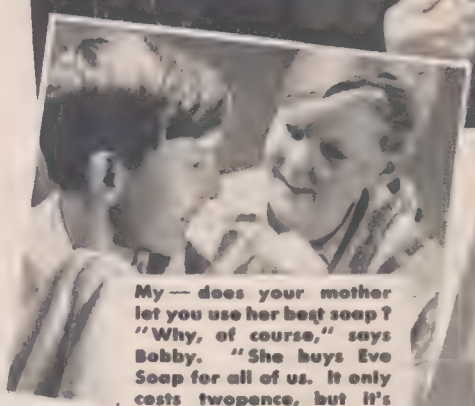

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SUN *never lose their* TAN

WE stood round the pram in a fluttering little group.

John senior held up a blade of grass to see that there really *was* no wind. Nurse clutched a diminutive garment tightly in her left hand, a worried look on her face. Granny was frankly sobbing. John Junior was the only member of the party who was composed. He lay in his pram, a patheti--cally thin little scrap of humanity, murmuring to himself. It was obvious to me that he was enjoying his first sun bath.

"Exposing a delicate baby of three months on a March day!" moaned John Junior's grandmother. "He'll catch pneumonia and die, I know he will!" and she clutched her fur coat higher to her throat.

"You might feel a little happier if you put down those enormous books," I replied, a little coldly. I disliked being accused of infanticide.

Granny bridled. "When you've read these books," she said, "you will realise the wrong you're doing this dear child," and with one last agonised look at the pram, she swept back into the house, still carrying the two large red tomes under her arm.

I put my hand gently on Junior's tummy. It was as warm as toast. He was still gurgling happily.

I turned him over, so that the sun shone on his back. He made no protest. He was obviously a born sun-worshipper.

After he had had five minutes each side, we dressed him. For the first time in his short little life, I could detect a faint colour in his not very round face.

Granny spent the rest of the day waiting to hear Junior cough.

When he was safely tucked up for the night, she handed me the two medical books which, as she frequently remarked, had been her standby in bringing up her six children. She had marked carefully one or two passages from which she thought I would gain most enlightenment.

"We wish we could adequately depict one of those miserable victims of parental vanity whose appearance will sometimes on a March day, strike cold into our hearts," I read. "The cap and feathers set upon (not covering) the child's head, contrast mournfully with the blue ears, sharpened nose, and shrunken cheeks (in which cold has assumed the features of starvation); the short kilt and Highland hose, exposing between them cracked and quivering knees, altogether require for their description more graphic power than we can presume to lay claim to."

I closed the book and hurried upstairs to the nursery.

With a beating heart I gazed at John Junior as he lay in his cradle. Thankfully, I realised that his ears were not blue, neither was his nose sharpened. His knees were not visible through the blankets, but I felt pretty sure that they were neither cracked nor quivering. Happily, I returned to my reading.

"The fashion of low neck and short sleeves for infants and very young children," I was informed, "has fortunately passed away—let us hope, not to return. The custom of allowing young children to go with legs bare has many enthusiastic advocates; while it may not be objectionable during the heat of the summer, its advantages at any season are very questionable in a changeable climate."

Patiently I explained to Granny that the books from which these extracts came had been written about seventy years previously and that the modern school of thought did not agree with these views. I pointed out that nowadays experts advised a minimum of clothing and a maximum of light and sunshine for babies.

Despite my eloquence, she parted from me for the night still convinced that John Junior would not be long for this world while his foolish young mother persisted in exposing his little body to the rigours of a cold but sunny March day.

As the summer progressed, Junior more than kept pace with it. He became a husky little brownie who rolled about the lawn exercising his sturdy limbs without the trammellings of clothes. The neighbours, from their vantage points of upstairs windows, muttered darkly of the N.S.P.C.C. and nudist colonies.

The grandparent had, by this time, almost become a convert, although one point still worried her.

"My children," she complained, "had lovely alabaster complexions. John Junior is beginning to look like a little nigger."

I glanced proudly at my masterpiece. He was engaged in a minute inspection of his toes.

"Yes, isn't he?" I said, delightedly. "Haven't you noticed that all the best babies are brown nowadays? I have it on the best authority that the cult of sun bathing is definitely darkening our children. Apparently in some cases the sun affects the adrenal gland so as to cause a permanent darkening of the skin. I do hope Johnny stays that lovely golden colour!"

Granny thought it a great pity that the lovely fair skins of the babies of fifty years ago should be gone. Much as she approved of the non-existence of rickets and the general improvement in health of babies brought up in the open air, she did like to see a fair complexion.

"They're at least two shades darker," she complained bitterly.

She was possibly thinking of my sister Gertrude. I have always been given to understand that there was a perfect baby, indeed. At a year old, her proud mother still tells us, people would turn round in the street to stare at such a handsome child.

"She had a skin like milk," she would sigh, reminiscently.

Nobody ever has the heart to point out to the fond parent that the only photograph in the family album of Gertrude at

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BABIES

A minimum of clothing and a maximum of sunshine advise the experts. All the best babies are brown, nowadays.

Woman to Woman

by Isabel Aldridge

an early age shows very clearly that the poor child was definitely over weight and suffered badly from adenoids and rickets. Her alabaster skin was probably the pallor of ill-health.

The beautiful copper tint of John Junior's entire body was achieved by a gradual process.

We realised that it would be foolhardy to expose a delicate little baby to the full strength of the sun too suddenly—so we started him off on a cool but sunny day. As long as there was no wind, he did not mind the air on his skin.

We gradually lengthened the time of each exposure until he was having half an hour a day. And loving it.

We could almost see the transformation from a very thin, delicate, worried-looking infant to a round, chubby, laughing baby. He used to lie on a rug in the garden looking like a very brown vest-pocket Hercules.

Even when the weather was cold, John Junior did not wear much in the way of clothes. The gentleman who was upset (so many years ago) by the pitiful sight of the child with a cap which did not entirely cover its head, and with knees exposed, would have had his heart wrung anew by the sight of Junior's uncovered head and completely bare legs on a November day.

Possibly the difference in the colour of the skin of the nineteenth century child may have caused him to be more sensitive to the cold air. His alabaster complexion was not tempered, perhaps, to the rigours of our variable climate.

John Junior, on the other hand, loves the feel of the air on his brown, sturdy little legs. Apparently he is one of those children whose adrenal gland is affected by the sun. At any rate, all through the two winters of his life, he has retained the lovely pigmentation of his skin.

At this moment, I can hear him engaged in a heated argument with Nurse.

She apparently thinks it would not be either seemly or comfortable for a naked child to ride up and down the garden on his kiddicar.

Junior's mind, however, seems to have acquired strength at the same rate as his body. His is a strong and colourful personality. He sees nothing at all unusual in riding a bicycle in the nude. As there seems no possibility of Nurse being persuaded to share his point of view, he changes his tactics.

"G'anny get it!" he commands suddenly, and his delighted grandparent obediently hurries into the house to obey the little two-year-old sun god, as he stands arrogantly upon the lawn.

John Junior is no longer a rarity. More and more modern mothers are joining the ranks of the sun worshippers on behalf of their children.

They have come to realise that it is not necessary to wait for a heat wave before undressing their infants and leaving them in the open air. It is only the over-clothed adult who resents a little cool air on his skin. Any healthy babe will benefit from his daily sun bath, so long as he is not left in the full glare of the afternoon sun.

Perhaps in a few years' time we shall regard a white-faced infant with as much astonishment as the Red Indians regarded the white man!

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When you've got a bit of money out of odd jobs the road isn't a bad life—if you know how to live it.

I'M *a* TRAMP

I WON'T put a name to this, for if I did it wouldn't be a true one. My name only matters to me and to one or two folk who are sorry it isn't something else. So far as you're concerned, names don't matter; when a man takes to the road he leaves his name behind him, perhaps for good and all.

I've been walking now nearly twenty years. I started when my mother took a second husband who didn't like the first lot of children, my sister and me. My sister ran away and went to London and I've never seen her since. I was fond of her; we were company for one another when mother and step-father were at the pub.

When Sis left I soon quit. I was on the road in a week, almost the worst week of the lot. I hadn't learned to ask anybody for anything and my feet were terribly sore. It was an old tramp who set me right and told me what to do.

He also told me about a bag. "You've got to carry one," he said, "to show what you are."

"I've nothing to put in it," I told him.

"Any fool can pick up a few empty tins and make his bag look as if it had something in it," was his answer.

I took the Great North Road when I started. I passed a lot of men on tramp but that was because I knew no better. Now I never do more than about two and a half miles an hour or twenty in the day; it's always the same general route, spike to spike.*

I was young then and strangers were kind, or some of them were. If I saw a party having a picnic and I could hang around till they were fed up, there was always something. The trouble was that it was good and I'd be hungry and I'd eat it all.

Then bad weather came and there was no one about and I'd be so hungry that it hurt. Nowadays, I never eat a full meal. I've learned to take just enough to keep myself going and to leave it at that.

Sleeping out is best. I'm on the road anything from eight to nine months out of twelve and I sleep out four or five nights in seven.

But I go to a spike once a week at least. I don't like 'em but they give you a clean bed. Sometimes, not always, it may even be comfortable, with a good mattress.

There are spikes where they don't keep mattresses. You can wash your things. But they don't make you feel happy—that isn't their job, and the food's all wrong. Six ounces of bread and half an ounce of butter or marge with cocoa, that's breakfast and supper at most. Dinner is bully beef, a potato, a few beans and a bit of bread and cheese. Sounds all right when you remember you get it for nothing, but the truth is it's poor stuff; you can't thrive on it.

Some spikes are better than others, but I've not met many I'd go to twice for choice. There's one that gives you a good bed and often an egg for breakfast. I won't name it.

If there are only a few men in the ward you'll have to pay your footing by sawing wood or doing housework: if they're crowded they're glad to let you go. I've never been asked to work at some spikes. Plymouth and Biggleswade are two of them.

Taking them all round, nasty places with clean beds, is the best I can say.

When you've got a bit of money out of pea-picking or fruit-picking the road isn't a bad life, particularly on days when the sun shines on both sides of the hedge. You can live well for a little, when you know how.

There are places in Dorchester and Salisbury where you can get a good meal and a comfortable bed for a shilling to eighteen-pence.

Then there are other homes, or whatever you like to call them, up and down the country where you pay tenpence a night and get seven nights for the price of six, with hot water to wash your clothes and a fire to cook on. You don't get searched and have your pockets emptied as you do when you go to the spike.

When you go to a lodging-house you register. The police come sometimes to look for people.

I've nothing against the police. None of us have. They're decent and helpful. They'll tell you where to go, where the slop shops are, who's likely to give you a job of work. They'll even help you to a coat or a pair of trousers if you're really down and out. I think some people send their used things to the police.

Remember we're on the road from one spike to another, at least that's the tale. We may come to a new place, a place we don't know, and then we go straight to the station. A policeman caught me once. I asked him who'd give me a meal and he said he thought I might get one in an hour or so at such an address. I went there and asked, then he came along—it was his house. He warned me against begging and gave me some food.

My bag? I don't mind showing you. That bread and cheese was given me yesterday. That shirt has my razor and comb and a piece of soap wrapped in it and some needle and thread. The frying pan is a good one. That tin has some sugar. If you're feeling beat, a couple of lumps of sugar make all the difference. Then there's my extra pair of boots. When I've a bit of money, I buy boots.

Of course not. I've never been in a bootmaker's shop in my life. There are plenty of places in the back streets of towns where you can buy a second-hand pair of easy fits, or change 'em if somebody has given you a pair that hurt.

Sometimes, come the autumn, I can buy an old coat: you don't know what you can get for half-a-crown if you're poor enough to have to lay it out carefully. I found a shilling in an old coat once, it had slipped through a hole in the lining.

I seldom buy food unless in a lodging-house. Sometimes I do well. So many motor folk eat by the roadside, and they all take more than they can eat.

We never leave a bit of a cigarette lying on the road. We pick it up and generally put it in a bag, any paper bag will do. When we have got enough we go through it carefully and remove the paper and mix the tobacco and, when we get to the lodging house we sell it to men who want to fill their pipes. They buy what we call "a pennorth of hardup," it is very much better than nothing, though it doesn't burn for long.

Taking 'em all round the poorer folk are kindest. They know what it is to be near the knuckle end. The best pitch in the world is a factory on pay-day. Get outside and sing. I've known men come by train to do that.

Yes, I sing sometimes; I've been paid not to.

A few years ago rich folk'd give you a lift along the road; now they're scared. Trouble is you've got to sit behind them or by the side of them and they won't risk it. I don't know why; many of us are quite clean. We haven't a deal of life or energy; we couldn't stand up against a well-fed man and we don't want to try. If a man's a thug he doesn't leg it.

Winter? Yes, I get under cover more often then. You're supposed to go to your parish spike if you can get in. If you can go twice in a month to the same one they keep you four days on the second visit. It's bad: you lose strength and you lose hope.

When the fine weather comes, how they all hop it. Count us on the road, as they say. There may be hundreds in a big spike one week and only ten the next.

Of course, there are houses that have a bit of the hospital about them and there you generally do better than in the casual ward. We know the best counties and the worst. By my experience I count Oxford and Norfolk among bad ones.

Why don't we talk to one another on the road? Why should we? Do you talk to all the men you meet? We don't walk on the same side of the road if we can help it. There are all sorts of folk about; classes among tramps.

Some of them are tattlers, professional beggars, with a few pennyworth of stock they only pretend to sell, others are sneak thieves. We who ask straightforward for a helping hand and don't swear if we can't get it, respect ourselves.

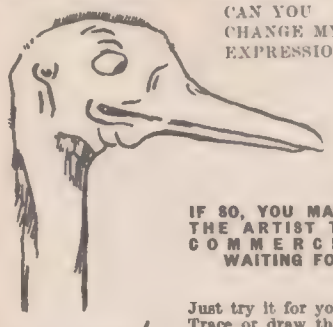
We're not quarrelsome, but we're not interested in other people. A man on the road plans a lone hand. But he can stop where he likes on a sunny day and the sun shines and the birds sing and the winds blow for him just as if he had a pocket full of money and sound clothes on his back and good boots on his feet.

I'd rather tramp than do the same job of work in a factory six days a week. We mayn't do much good but we do no harm, and there are plenty of times when the farmer would miss us if we weren't about, at potato-planting, fruit-picking. and digging,

Some men take a hawker's licence and sell odds and ends, straight small business. They can make a living if they're lucky. They won't go to the spike, but go to the lodging-house. The bosses coin money—at the big ones, anyway. If you've thirty or forty men paying for a bed and buying food from you every night, it must be a good job.

The end? Well, that hasn't come yet. When you're still fairly young and very active you don't want to look too far ahead.

* A spike is a workhouse.



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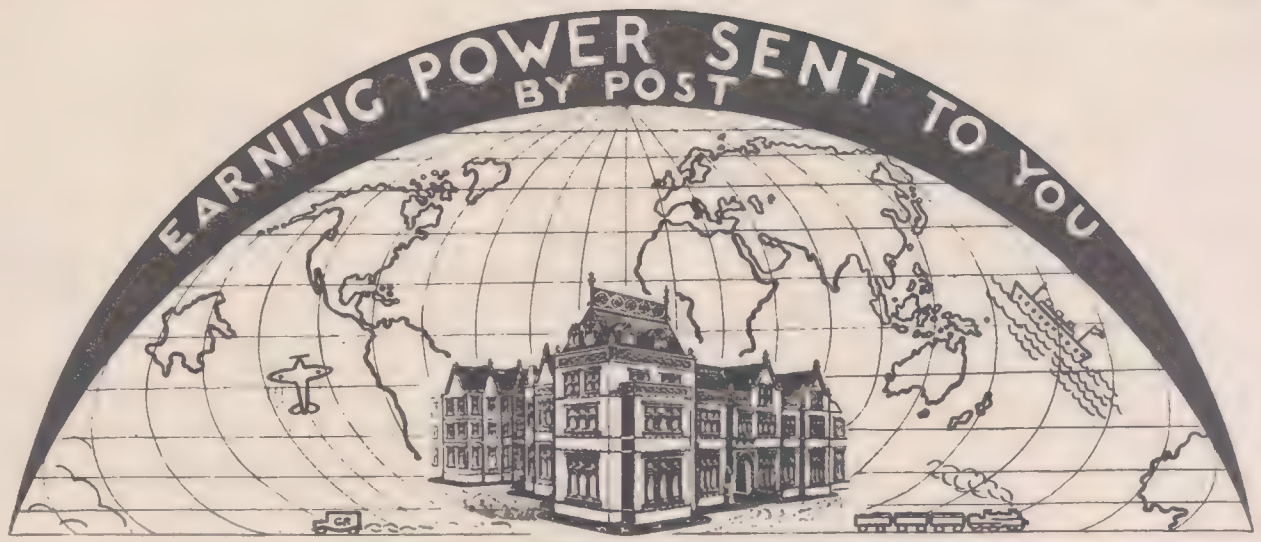

OPEN LETTER TO PARENTS

Dear Sir or Madam,—When your children first arrived they brought with them a wonderful lot of sunshine. Later you became proud of the intelligence they displayed, but still later you became anxious as to what would become of them in the future. Perhaps you were anxious when you visualised them as grown men and women. Even with plenty of money it is not always easy to select the right career, and a parent is sometimes inclined to ask advice of some relative and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred that relative knows nothing at all about the possibilities of employment. Why not let me relieve you of some of your anxieties? In fact, why not let me be their Father? We do not profess to act as an employment agency, but the nature of our business compels us to keep an eye upon the class of men and women that are wanted and who wants them. There are some people who manufacture an article and put it on the market to sell. We do not do that: we work in exactly the opposite direction. We find out what employers want and we train our students to fill these jobs. We have to be experts in the matter of employment, progress and prosperity. If you have any anxieties at all as to what your sons or daughters should be, write to me, or better still, let them write to me personally—Fatherly Advice Department—and tell me their likes and dislikes, and I will give sound, practical advice as to the possibilities of a vocation and how to succeed in it. Yours sincerely,

J. H. Bennett

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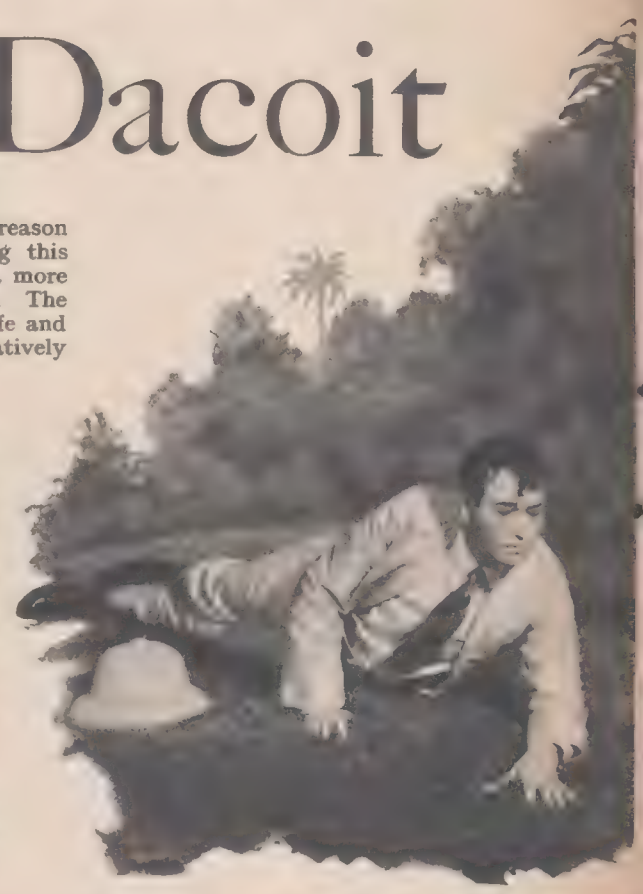
THE WHITE Dacoit



AN apparently trifling reason prompts me to dig this experience out of a more or less buried past. The other night, my wife and I were visiting some comparatively new acquaintances. Our host, whom I had met in the way of business, possessed two things in common with me. He had spent some time in India. Also he played a good game of chess.

The combination of India and chess carried my mind back to matters which were far from trifling. It brought vividly to my memory a time when, in a certain district of southern India, my fondness for chess played a wholly unexpected part in a drama of life, which itself proved not without its surprises.

Generally speaking, in that small European community of ours, life seemed so much without surprises as to be almost intolerably boring. With two other Englishmen, I was employed in superintending works engaged in the matmaking industry. It was an easy job of work, with little to harass one.

Apart from the English representatives of commercial firms, there were some railway officials and their wives. Of these, an elderly man named Grant and his wife were specially friends of mine. That had come about firstly, because Grant had discovered that I was the best match he had so far met over a chessboard. For that reason, if we were not playing at the club, I was always welcome at his bungalow.

His wife, Mary, was much younger than her husband, and very pretty. It was common talk at the club that their marriage was not capable of being a happy one. Everyone knew too, that a certain young fellow, Bentham by name, was mad about her. A great deal of whispered scandal followed these two, when they danced, or played tennis together, as they did a great deal.

Personally, spending so much time at the Grants' home, I did not believe a half of that whispered scandal, which anyhow is inseparable from Anglo-Indian life. Mary Grant, in her own home, did not behave like a wife who had the slightest idea of being unfaithful to her husband, even in thought.

But, naturally, the time came when that whispered calumny was bound to reach her husband's ears. Nothing was said openly, but Bentham ceased to visit their bungalow, or to be in Mary Grant's company at the club. In fact, he came there little; and, when he did, he spent most of his time at the bar.

Meanwhile, our jaded interests had been quickened, and turned in a different direction by an outbreak of dacoities.

Dacoits, a sort of Indian equivalent to our London smash-and-grab raiders, are more primitive and even more subtle in their methods. They are also more difficult to catch. In this particular epidemic, it became clear that an even more than usually clever gang was at work.

My own office was entered one night, and a considerable sum in rupees—drawn from the bank to pay wages the next day—disappeared in the blackness of a sweltering night. Other losses were reported in the course of two or three weeks, but the police seemed baffled. The dacoits simply vanished into thin air with their loot.

Bentham's firm was one of those which suffered, I discovered from his talk one night at the club, a large amount disappearing in the night. He was loud in his abuse of the police and their seeming helplessness, the more because he had evidently been drinking heavily.

It happened that evening. that Grant was not at the club, having gone up the line on some important duty. But Mary had looked in with some other people. I noticed that Bentham and she danced together a couple of times, and went out into the compound, which was planted to make a pretty garden.

That something serious had passed between the two was evident to me shortly afterwards when I found her by my side, asking me if I would walk over with her to their bungalow. Although she was obviously trying to appear calm, I realised that really she was suffering some distress.

"I do hope you're not one of those who believe that I'm wicked enough to be in love with Frank," she said to me, using Bentham's Christian name, while we were on the way through the hot, moonless night.

"That I most certainly don't!" was my immediate answer, straight from the heart, and I still remember the grateful look she gave me.

"I wish he'd be as certain as you are," she said. "The trouble is that he won't believe it. I think he's mad. I ought not to have danced with him to-night. I had a dreadful time. The things he said about my husband! He frightened me."

That made me madder than ever with Bentham, and I told her that I'd see he didn't frighten her any more, that I'd have a word with the gentleman which would teach him better behaviour. But she begged me not to do that.

"I suppose I'm really to blame," she said. "But of course I didn't dream, when I made a friend of him, that things would go so far. That wasn't my idea at all, only—he sees everything so differently, and without the very slightest reason."

Just then, as we were reaching the bungalow compound, Grant came on us out of the darkness on his way from the station, which was quite near. I think that for a moment he thought his wife was with Bentham, for his greeting of her sounded harsh. But, when he heard my voice he laughed heartily, thanking me for bringing Mary home and urging me to go with them indoors.

"It'll just do me the world of good to teach you how chess really should be played, my boy!" he chuckled, using words which, by now, I knew by heart.

When we were inside, while Mary fetched refreshment, he put away in a

True Life Stories

He got away after grounding me with a terrific blow to the jaw.

bureau a thick wad of paper money, which he waved in front of me first, laughing as he did so.

"Close on five thousand rupees there!" he said. "That would be a nice haul for our dacoit friends, if they only knew about it!"

He had the handling of considerable sums for the railway, as a matter of fact, so—apart from laughing at his joke—I thought no more of it. Mary came back with a native servant, bringing drinks and something for Grant to eat. We three chatted for a while, and then Mary went to bed, leaving us, already with a chess-board between us, moving pieces in a tense silence.

Grant was in fine fettle, better even than usual, and he was unquestionably a clever player. We played, I remember, five games, both of us being level at four, the last being decisive. That game caught me napping, for I was tired anyhow. With the devastating use of knights, and an unnoticed bishop, he brought me to a sudden check-mate.

Goodness only knew what hour of the morning it was then, for the games had been slow. He made to see me off, but I wouldn't let him. So he went to his bureau, saying he had some writing still to do.

"You know," he said, as we shook hands, "I was tremendously relieved to-night when I found it was you with Mary. For a minute——"

He stopped as if he felt he had been led into saying more than he should. But I took him up.

"If you ask me," I said, "the sooner that fellow Bentham stops pestering Mary, the better she'll be pleased—and you as well. It's a pity he can't be shifted back to the old country, or out of here anyhow."

"Oh, I'm seeing to that!" he rejoined. "I've taken steps already, only he doesn't know it yet!"

A few minutes later, leaving him to his writing, I made my way out into the dark, suffocating night. It was tensely still as I stood on the verandah. A surround of trees made the moonless, starless night seem like some black room in which it was almost impossible to breathe.

Yet, as I swung out from the lighted interior of the bungalow into that pitch-blackness, I was suddenly aware that someone was breathing quite heavily near me. You perhaps know how sometimes you can sense an unseen presence, become warned by instinct of some imminent danger.

I stretched out a hand, and knew I was right. My fingers touched the cotton clothing of a native which was as swiftly torn from my grasp. I don't know why I didn't yell out to Grant, but I didn't.

I just closed with the wriggling shape inside that native clothing, saying to myself that I had caught one of our troublesome dacoits, lying in waiting after Grant's money.

However, strong and fit as I was, this fellow was as good as me. What was more, for a native, he seemed to have an unusual knowledge of boxing, for he only got away from me by landing a terrific blow on my jaw which took me completely by surprise.

Before I could quite recover, I could hear him racing away in the darkness. I followed, getting direction more by my ears than by vision. Still, when once I thought I had lost the intended thief, a light from a bungalow showed him to me in the distance ahead, a native running all out to get away.

And, for that matter, it seemed that he had done so. By the time I reached that bungalow, which was at a cross-road, he was neither within sight nor hearing. It seemed useless to waste time and energy in further pursuit, I decided, completely out of breath.

Then, as I swung round towards that bungalow, a light from which had shown me the fellow, I held my breath in amazement.

For the man himself was stumbling into its lighted interior. As he vanished from sight, I was after him, suddenly realising something else. The bungalow was the one occupied by nobody less than Bentham.

A moment later, inside that bungalow myself, the truth suddenly came to me. It was Bentham, who stood there, admitting himself discovered, in native clothes. Now, for one thing, I knew why that supposed native had such an unusual knowledge of boxing. Bentham, disguised as a native and playing the dacoit.

But it did not prove to be quite that. There might have been something far more sinister behind it all, as I was to discover when Bentham got talking. He confessed it to me, little by little, realising that he was completely in my hands.

"I meant to kill Grant," he told me. "I thought, wearing native clothes and if anyone chanced to see me, the thing would be put down to a dacoit. But I didn't count on you being there, and then you came out on me in the darkness, seemed to know somebody was there. Of course, I must have been stark, raving mad to think of such a thing. It was just—Grant standing between Mary and me——"

Well, of course, he had been wrong there, and I told him so. He could never have been anything to Mary, even if he had committed that terrible crime. The question only remained as to what I should do with my knowledge.

As a matter of fact, in the end, it remained a secret between Bentham and myself.

I could see no good, only harm in letting it go farther. Bentham left for England in less than a week's time, not with any regret on the part of the Grants. And, after he had gone, the dacoities still continued.

But, whenever I see a chess-board, I think of how, but for those five games on that night of sinister purpose, the end of this story might have been very different.

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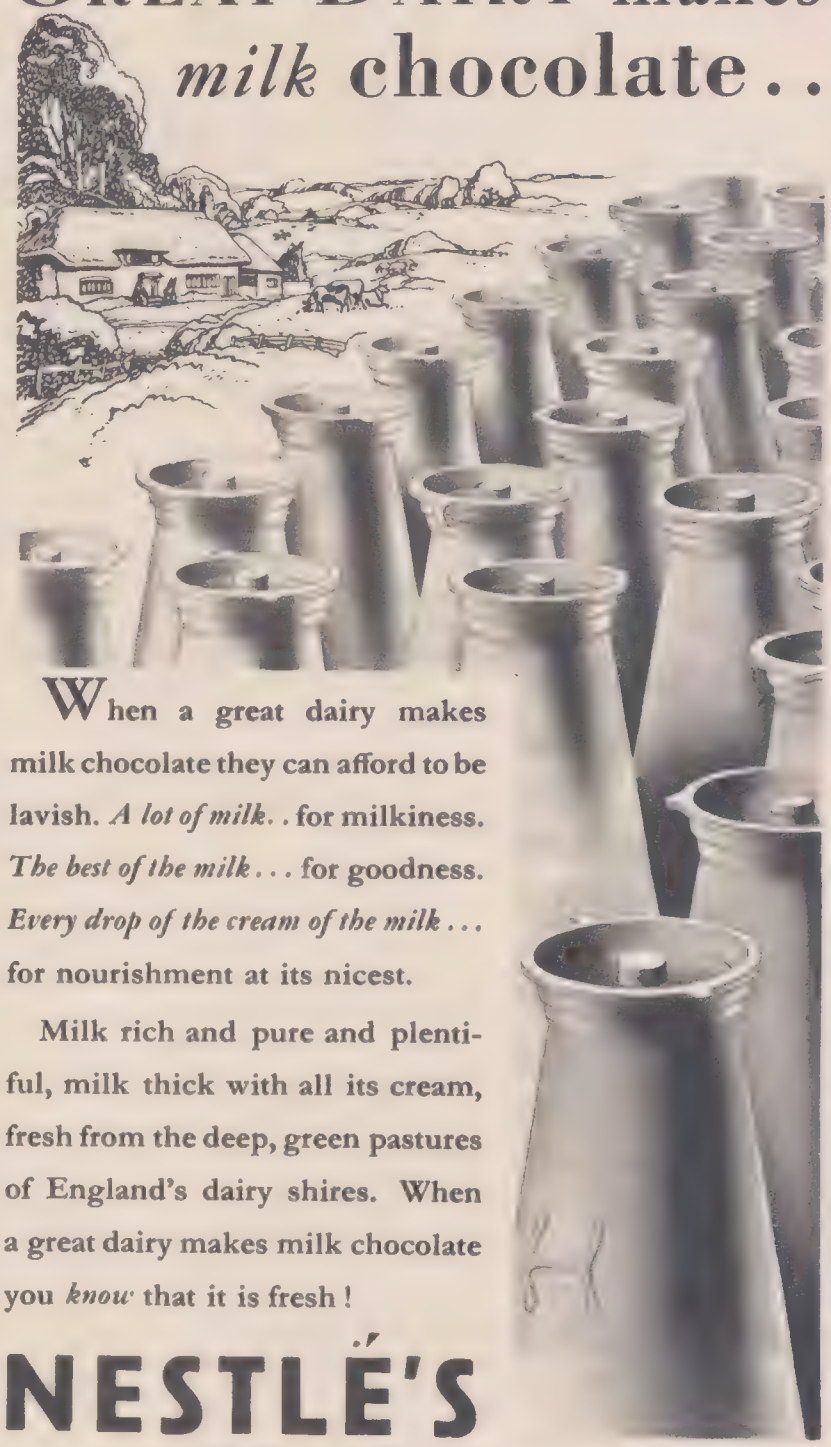

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Continuing Stowaway *to* Mars

rocket-ship itself and printed handkerchiefs as suitable momentoes of the occasion.

A hundred camp-kitchens began to cater for the hungry. Half a dozen loudspeakers burst into the inevitable "Curty, the King of the Clouds." A number of persons was already failing to Find the Lady. And still it was only 8 a.m.

Somewhere about nine-thirty Police Gyrocurt Number 4 came hovering close to Number 5. Number 4's pilot picked up a megaphone and shouted across :

"Just look at 'em down there, Bill. Like a bloomin' ant-'eap, ain't it?"

Bill, in Number 5, nodded.

"If they keep on comin' in at this rate, we'll 'ave to start parking them vertical," he bawled back.

That part of the Plain which lay below them had undergone a transformation. Outside the five-mile circle of the beacon balloons acres of country were covered with parked cars and 'planes. From them crowds of black dots were stippled inwards, growing denser as they converged.

The barrier which held the public back out of harm's way appeared already as a solid black ring two miles in diameter and of greater thickness on the western side where the several stands, broadcasting and observation towers and various other temporary structures were situated. Finally, in splendid isolation in the exact centre, could be seen the *Gloria Mundi* herself.

The portable sheds of those who had attended to the last tests and adjustments had been cleared away, leaving only discoloured rectangles of grass to show where they had stood for the last fortnight. Gone also was the galvanised-iron fence which had served to keep back the curious during that time, and the rocket, still shrouded in canvas, was left with a cordon of police as her only guard.

By midday the crowd was still swelling. The refreshment stalls were beginning to wonder whether the supply would hold out, and in accordance with economic laws were raising their prices.

A small, insignificant member of the crowd plucked at Police Sergeant Yarder's sleeve and pointed upwards.

"Look, Officer, there's a gyrocurt inside the beacons."

Sergeant Yarder shaded his eyes and followed the line of the pointing finger.

"That'll be Mr. Curtance and the rest, sir. Got to let *them* through, or there wouldn't be no show."

Others had noticed the 'plane's arrival. A sound of cheering rose, faint at first, but growing in volume until it swept up in a great roar from tens of thousands of throats as more and more of the spectators realised that Dale was here at last. The 'plane dropped slowly and landed.

The door opened and Dale could be seen waving in reply. He stepped to the ground and his four chosen companions followed. A few moments later they were all hidden from the crowd by a converging rush of movie-vans and Press-cars. The gyrocurt took off again and the mob of vans and cars moved closer to the still-shrouded rocket.

The announcer up in the broadcasting tower talked excitedly into his microphone.

"He's here! You have just seen Dale Curtance arrive to make his interplanetary attempt. They're moving over now towards the rocket. The five are somewhere in the middle of that group there. The crowd is shouting itself hoarse. Here, we are more than a mile from the rocket itself, but we are going to do our best to show you the unveiling ceremony. Just a minute, please, while we change the lens."

The scene on the vision screens flickered and then blurred as the teleoptic was swung in. It refocused, searched, and finally came to rest on Dale and the group about him. He stood on a temporary wooden dais at the rocket's foot. In one hand he held the end of a rope which ran upwards out of television screen's field.

"Now we are going over to hear Mr. Curtance himself speak through the microphone which you can see beside him," said the announcer.

A sudden, expectant silence fell on the crowds. Those who had brought portable screens with them watched Dale step forward smiling. The rest shaded their eyes to gaze at the group a mile away and imagine that well-known smile as a hundred loudspeakers spoke at once :

"Anything I could say in answer to such a salute as you have given me must be inadequate. All that I can say, on behalf of my companions and myself, is 'Thank You.' We are going to do our best to prove ourselves worthy of such a reception. Again, 'Thank You.'"

He paused and tightened his hold on the hanging rope.

"And now," he added, "here is my *Gloria Mundi*."

He pulled on the rope. For a breathless second nothing seemed to happen. Then the canvas fell away from the top, slithering down the polished metal sides to subside in billowing waves on the ground. The earlier cheers had been but a murmur compared with the volume of sound which now roared from the packed crowds.

The *Gloria Mundi* gleamed in the sunlight. She towered on the level plain like a monstrous shell designed for the artillery of giants; a shapely mass of glistening metal poised on a tripod of three great flanges, her blunt nose pointing already into the blue sky whither—if all went well—she would presently leap.

And then, surprisingly, the cheering died away. It was as though it had come home to the mass of sightseers for the first time that the five men on the platform were volunteers for almost certain death; that the shell-like shape beside them was indeed a shell—the greatest projectile the world had ever seen, and that all of it, save for a small part near the nose where the circular windows showed, was filled with the most powerful known explosives.

When the crowd began to talk again a new note was dominant. The spirit of bank holiday jubilation had become impregnated with anxiety and a sense of trepidation. Even the phlegmatic Sergeant Yarder was aware of its injection.

The proposed flight had hitherto stirred his imagination only slightly; and that because the crowd attending its start was the largest on record. Now he looked across at the rocket with a new curiosity. Why wasn't the Earth big enough for them? It must be a queer kind of man who could find so little of interest in all the five continents and seven seas that he wished to shoot himself out into the emptiness of space.

And what good would it do anybody, even if they managed it? What good had any of these rockets ever done? Even Drivers' flight round the Moon hadn't meant anybody's betterment. There had been millions of money wasted and scores of good men killed. . . .

(*Continued on page* 36)

Passing Slips

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What it Means to You *by Francis Williams*

MORE WORK FOR THE LEAGUE

I WROTE in a recent article of the urgent need for the new World Conference which was suggested following the occupation of the Rhineland zone by the German troops. I mentioned then that this new conference should operate within the framework of the League of Nations, and that its decisions and conclusions should be made effective largely by an expansion of present League activity.

The League, however, is not perhaps at its best in publicising itself, and a number of people, not fully acquainted with the work done at Geneva, are sometimes a little critical of the "parliament of nations."

It is worth while, then, to review briefly some of the achievements of this extraordinary organisation to which 1,500,000,000 people in nearly sixty nations send a thousand representatives to discuss disputes between them and to carry on the difficult task of planning peace.

The Council and the Assembly of the League have been involved in about three dozen outstanding political problems.

They have themselves solved, or given material assistance in solving, about half of those problems to the satisfaction of the opposing parties concerned. And about fifteen efforts to find acceptable solutions have been unsuccessful; among them the Manchurian affair, where British foreign policy at that time largely assisted Japan's act of annexation, and the Vilna dispute.

The failures, however, are more than balanced by the successes. Among these are notable the Aland Islands dispute between Sweden and Finland in 1921, the Greco-Bulgarian frontier incident in 1925, the dispute between Colombia and Peru in 1933, and the first-class crisis between Hungary and Yugoslavia caused by the assassination of King Alexander, two years ago.

The last incident alone might easily have resulted in a serious war but for speedy intervention by the League; and any one of the other disputes might have had grave repercussions.

These, it must not be forgotten, represent an important but, nevertheless, only a single part of the League of Nation's activities. In addition to problems of disarmament and peace, inquiries and reports are constantly being undertaken on such varied subjects as the traffic in drugs and the hours of labour of seamen, dockers, and miners.

The achievements of the League are the more remarkable when one considers the enormous disadvantages under which it has to work as the result of non-co-operation by such powerful countries as the United States, Germany, and Japan.

Before the League is perfect, it must represent the peoples of all nations. The new World Conference, if it does, as it is to be hoped it will, make a real attempt at solving some of our most pressing problems, may well provide the avenue by which the States which now remain outside the League could be brought into it once more.

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The small circular door high up in the rocket's side shut with a decisive thud. The few favoured pressmen who had been allowed upon the small staging beside it clattered down the wooden steps and joined their less privileged fellows on the ground. Almost before the last of them was clear a squad of workmen was tipping over staging and steps together to load them across a lorry. The movie-vans and the journalists' cars began to jolt over the grass towards the Press enclosure. Not far behind them followed the trucks carrying the last of the workmen. The *Gloria Mundi*, glowing in the rays of the sinking sun, was left sheer and solitary.

"Twenty minutes," said Dale, unemotionally. If the others heard him, they gave no sign of it. He looked at them, noticing their reactions to the strain of waiting as they stood clustered close to the circular windows. Of the five men in the steel room he was the least affected. His years of rocket racing had bred in him the ability to face the start of an adventure in a spirit of cold fatalism —or, perhaps more accurately, to anaesthetise temporarily his natural emotions. The other four were gazing through the thick-fused quartz panes across the unlovely Plain as though it were the most beautiful view on earth.

Geoffrey Dugan, the youngest of them, took the least trouble to hide his feelings. Dale looked sympathetically at his eyes shining brightly with excitement, noted his parted lips and quick breathing through closed teeth. He knew just what Dugan was feeling. Had he not gone through it all himself? He had been twenty-four, just Dugan's present age, when he had flown in the Equatorial race, and he had not forgotten his sensations before the start. The lad was the right stuff. He was glad that he had chosen him out of the thousands of possibles to be his assistant pilot and navigator.

Froud, the journalist, turned and caught his eyes, grinned unconvincingly, and then looked back to the window. Dale noticed that he was fidgeting. So the tension was getting under that cynical gentleman's skin, was it?

James Burns, the engineer, leaned against the glass, looking out. To appearance he was almost as calm as Dale himself, but when he moved, it was with a tell-tale, irritable jerk. The expression on his face maintained a proper solemnity as would become one about to attend his own funeral.

As far as his crew was concerned, Dale's only misgivings were on account of its last member. The sight of the doctor's face, ominously white and haggard, worried him. There had been much criticism of his decision to include this man of fifty-six in his party, and it began to look as if the critics might be justified. Still, it was too late now for regrets—one could only hope for the best.

Doctor Grayson lifted his eyes to the clear blue sky and gave an involuntary shudder. His face felt clammy and he knew that it was pale. He knew, too, that his eyes were looking glassy behind his thick spectacle lenses, and his utmost efforts could not altogether restrain the trembling of his hands.

Froud looked across the Plain to the black line held in check by an army of police. Up on the Press tower were the small, dark figures of men he knew, fellow journalists to whom he had said good-bye a short while ago. They had all professed envy of him. He doubted whether one of them meant it or would have been willing to change places with him, given the chance. At the moment he himself would willingly have changed places with any one of them. He turned to look again at the closely packed crowds.

"Thousands and thousands of them, all waiting for the big bang," he murmured. "I wouldn't mind betting that there's a whole crowd out there—not excluding my professional brethren—who'd consider it a better show if we blew up than if we went up."

"Aye, you're right there," agreed Burns, his deep voice according well with his gloomy expression. "They're the kind who don't feel they've had their money's worth unless some poor body crashes in an air race. But they're going to be disappointed with the *Gloria Mundi*. I helped to build her, and she's not going to blow up."

The doctor moved, irritably.

"I wish you two wouldn't talk about blowing up. Isn't this waiting bad enough without imagining horrors?"

Young Geoffrey Dugan agreed with him. His look of eager anticipation was becoming supplanted by a worried frown.

"I'm with you, Doc. I wish we could get going now. This hanging about is getting me down. How much longer?" he added, turning back to Dale.

"Quarter of an hour," Dale told him. "We better be getting ready, Dugan. What's it say on the weather tower?"

Dugan crossed to one of the other windows.

"Wind speed twelve miles an hour," he said.

"Good. Not much allowance necessary for that." Dale turned back to the others. "Put up the shutters now. It's time we got to the hammocks."

He switched on a small light set in the ceiling. The shutter-plates, heavy pieces of steel alloy, were swung across and their rubber-faced edges clamped into place. When the last had been screwed down to its utmost and made airtight, the men turned to their hammocks.

These were couches slung by metal rods. Finely tempered steel and softest down had been used in an effort to produce the acme of comfort. No fairy-tale princess ever rested upon a bed one-half so luxuriously yielding as those provided for the five men.

They climbed on to them without speaking, and felt for the safety-straps. The doctor's pale face had gone yet whiter. Little beads of sweat were gathering beneath his lower lip. Dugan saw him fumbling clumsily with the straps, and leaned across.

"Here, let me do it, Doc," he suggested.

The doctor nodded his thanks and lay back while Dugan's strong, steady hands slid the webbing into the buckles.

"Five minutes," said Dale.

Dugan attended to his own straps, then all five lay waiting.

The engineer rested motionless with all the graven solemnity of a stone knight upon his tomb. The journalist wriggled slightly to find the most comfortable position.

"Good beds you give your guests, Dale," he murmured. "Makes one wonder why we're such damn' fools as ever to do anything but sleep."

Dale lay silent, his eyes fixed upon a flicking second-hand. The fingers of his right hand already grasped the starting-lever set into the side of his couch. His concentration left him without visible sign of fear, excitement or worry.

"Two minutes."

The tension increased. Froud ceased to fidget. Dugan felt his heart begin to beat more quickly. The doctor started to count the seconds subconsciously; the surface of his mind was tormented with suggestions. Even yet it was not too late. If he were to jump up and attack Dale. . . .

"Half a minute."

"And then—what?" thought the doctor. He turned his head. His uneasy eyes met Dugan's, and he heard a murmur of encouragement.

"Fifteen seconds," said Dale.

A comforting fatalism crept over the doctor. One must die sooner or later. Why not now? He'd had a good run for his money. If only it were quick . . .

"Five—four—three—two—one . . ."

The chattering of the crowd died down to a murmur, and thence to an excited silence broken only by the voice from the loudspeakers inexorably counting away the time. Every eye was turned to the centre of the circle, each focused upon the glittering rocket, scarcely daring even to blink lest it should miss the critical moment of the start. Into the dullest mind there crept at this moment some understanding of the scene's true meaning—a thrill of pride in the indomitable spirit of man striving once again to break his age-old bondage: reaching out to grasp the very stars.

So, into unknown perils had gone the galleys of Ericson; so, too, had gone the caravels of Columbus, fearing that they might sail over the edge of the world into the Pit of Eternity, but persistent in their courage.

It might well be that this day, this twelfth of October, 1981, would go down to history as a turning-point in human existence—it might well be . . .

The last tense seconds passed. The watchers held their breath and strained their eyes.

A flash stabbed out between the tail fins. The great rocket lifted. She seemed balanced upon a point of fire, soaring like the huge shell she was into the blue above. Fire spewed from her ports in a spreading glory of livid flame like the tail of a monstrous comet. And when the thunder of her going beat upon the ears of the crowd, she was already a fiery spark in the heavens . . .

Next Week:
THE GIRL FROM NOWHERE.

"I must have fallen asleep at the coffee stall!"

Passing Shots

"Modesty is a disease," we read.

The general health seems to be improving, then.

◆ ◆ ◆

An auctioneer recently showed signs of great emotion when something of his own came under the hammer. An auctioneer should learn to keep his thumb out of harm's way.

◆ ◆ ◆

We read that a Mexican prison is built entirely of yellowish-white cement. A sort of cream jug.

◆ ◆ ◆

"I am twenty-two and my girl friend is twenty-eight," writes a young man. "Do you think we ought to marry?" Why not wait a few years until you're both about the same age?

◆ ◆ ◆

There is a fish hospital attached to the aquarium in an American zoo. We cure fish in this country, too.

◆ ◆ ◆

"There is a vast difference between the woman motor-ace and the woman gossip," states a novelist. The former, of course, steps on the gas, while the latter gasses on the step.

◆ ◆ ◆

A publisher maintains that the wireless is causing a decline in the popularity of books of modern poetry. Another belief is that books of modern poetry are responsible.

◆ ◆ ◆

A sad case is reported from Hollywood. It seems that a film-star's secretary was so careless with her records that her divorces number three more than her marriages.

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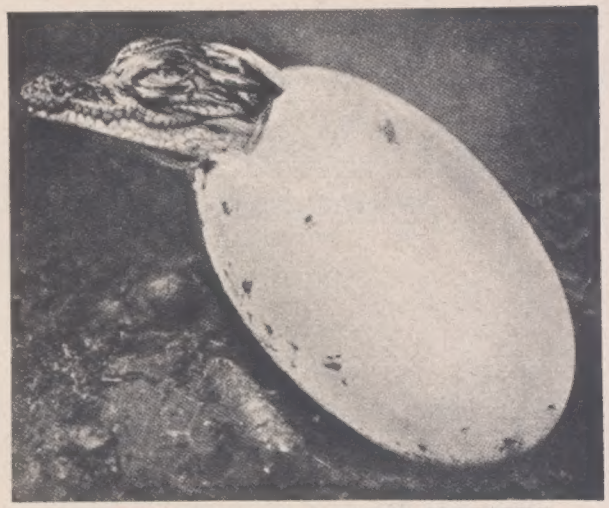

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This Photograph of the Founder of Maxalding was taken in 1911,

A. M. Saldo

further proof of what Maxalding will do. Better still, at the age of 57, I take up the challenge of the 14 stone 7 lb. P.C. teacher on all points. I will prove that Maxalding is the best and most practical method ever discovered; that it has more devotees than any other method; that more genuine testimonials and unretouched photographs of successful pupils have been published by Maxalding than by the exponent of any other method; and finally I offer to meet this gentleman personally in public contest to demonstrate practically who is actually the fitter. I agree to keep within the welter-weight limit, but insist that my opponent must weigh at least the 14 st. 7 lb. of solid muscle claimed. A. M. Woollaston.

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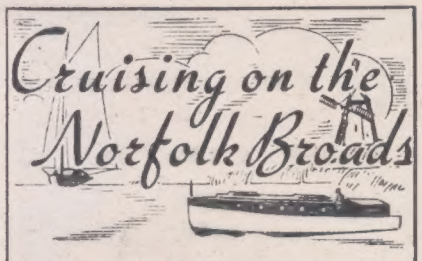

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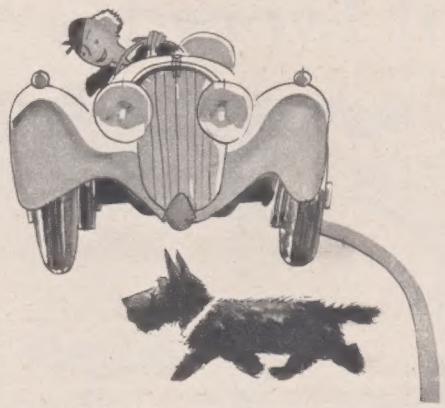
NUMBER SEVENTY-TWO in that well-thumbed manual entitled One Hundred Editorial Alibis must be trotted out this week, nicely dusted, to meet the inquisitions of divers readers, including James Johnston of Merton. What is worrying Mr. Johnston apart from having to live at Merton, which is alone sufficient to discourage and disgruntle any man, is Tobacco Smoke. "Why is it," asks Mr. Johnston, "when one inhales tobacco smoke and exhales it immediately the smoke is a strong *blue*-grey; if on the other hand you retain the smoke for a few seconds the resulting colour when exhaled is *yellow*-grey?"

WITH US, MR. JOHNSTON, the colour was purple, and the man from the next room, who saved us from asphyxiation, still maintains we were wrong in refusing to allow him to telephone for a doctor. Perhaps we held on too long. If you lament our ignorance, Mr. Johnston, we can only refer you to another Johnson as quoted in the aforesaid Manual, Alibi Number Seventy-two. "How came you, Doctor Johnson, to define pastern as the knee of a horse?" "Ignorance, madam, pure ignorance." And whilst we are on the melancholy subject of editorial fallibility, we may as well come clean and confess that we don't know the answer to the problem propounded hereunder by Mr. Pasfield of Dudley.

THE WATER-LILY PROBLEM is simple. Correct answer, forty-nine years the first half, one year the second half. But here is a teaser for Uncle Joe, who, like all Cornishmen, surely keeps a canary. Two cyclists, forty miles apart, cycle towards each other at twenty miles an hour. A bird, not Uncle Joe's canary, flits without pause to and fro from one to the other during the whole of their ride. If the bird keeps a steady forty-three miles an hour, how far has it flown by the time the cyclists meet?" Not that we care, anyway, and what a relief to find Miss Ruth Maier of New York City, telling instead of asking in the next letter :

I AM WRITING TO CALL your attention to a humorous sidelight on a cartoon in the PASSING SHOW. The cartoon shows a gentleman applying at a hotel desk with two performing seals and asking for a room and two baths—one for himself and one for his seals. Well "truth is stranger than fiction," and this request could actually be filled in New York City by the George Washington Hotel, 23rd Street and Lexington Avenue, the only one of its kind in the Metropolis which could carry out such an unusual demand. A guest of the George Washington Hotel clipped the cartoon from your publication and mailed it on to the manager, Mr. Charles Schwefel, suggesting that his "Believe It Or Not" arrangement of a room and two baths would be interesting to you to know about since you were the original source of a cartoon on that subject. . . ." Thanks, Miss Maier, for bridging an awkward interlude. In gratitude we propose to tell you all about Miss Winifred Barrier of Hull and her wonderful dog.

"and yet an eminent psychologist asserts that dogs don't think."



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I WONDER," WRITES MISS BARRIER, "if you have ever heard of a dog with as much traffic sense as mine? He has lived all his life in large cities, and, without any training from me, he has learned to look right, before crossing a road. When he reaches the middle he looks left, and if there is an island he stands on it. Hull has level crossings over nearly all the main streets, and I have never known him cross one without waiting for me. He always goes straight across the road—never diagonally, and in busy streets he will sometimes go and wait for the traffic policeman to hold up the traffic. Although in his wilder moments he can be disobedient over other matters, he has never yet failed to obey instantly a command relating to traffic. To crown all, on busy roads, he most deliberately looks for, and crosses by a Belisha beacon. And yet an eminent psychologist asserts that dogs don't think. . . ." We are sorry you mentioned the psychologist, Miss Barrier, because that brings us to Mr. Williams of Port Talbot.

HEREWITH," WRITES MR. WILLIAMS, with the forthrightness of manner peculiar to the people of Port Talbot, "a couple of words I'd like you to sort out for me. I've looked them up in various dictionaries and encyclopaedias, but am still as wise. What differentiates a psychiatrist from a psychologist and where do psychometrists and neurologists come in? Also psycho-analyst? One thing I did determinate, however, and that is, that once a psychiatrist or neurologist enters a courtroom he becomes an alienist. These words constantly crop up in newspaper reports. I think I've got you this time—wise guy! . . ." You can have us, Mr. Williams, because we are not in the mood for messing about with dictionaries this afternoon. And speaking of dictionaries reminds us that even the great Dr. Johnson had to confess his ignorance to a certain lady who had twitted him about a wrong definition in his dictionary.

AND, SPEAKING OF LADIES, Mrs. Coles, of Kidlington (Oxon), wants to know why nearly all women when choosing a book always look at the last page first? "Is it just curiosity, or must we be sure that it ends happily before we start? I'm just the same with the PASSING SHOW, I always read the last page first. . . ." Again we don't know. And that reminds us of a funny story which, if Mrs. Coles is right, should be new to many of our feminine readers. Shortly after the publication of his dictionary, Dr. Johnson was asked by a lady how he came to define pastern as the knee of a horse. "Ignorance, madam, pure ignorance," replied the worthy lexicographer.

THANK YOU, Dr. Johnson.

Pavement Peril

TWELVE-YEAR-OLD Reginald, of Chelmsford, will be a bit chary about his favourite pastime of skating in the future.

The other day, when rounding a corner in particularly dashing style, he slipped, fell on the curb and sustained a fractured thigh.

How thankful Reggie's parents were when they remembered that they had filled up the forms for THE PASSING SHOW's Great Free Family Insurance Gift. Under this comprehensive Free Security Gift they promptly received a substantial cheque in respect of their son's accident, which will enable them to meet the additional expenses of medical treatment without any further anxiety.

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One registration covers husband, wife and children (over six and under fifteen), and all accident benefits are paid *in addition* to any sum a reader may receive from other sources.

Turn to page 33 and, if you are not already registered, fill up the forms *now*.

Solution Next Week

CLUES DOWN

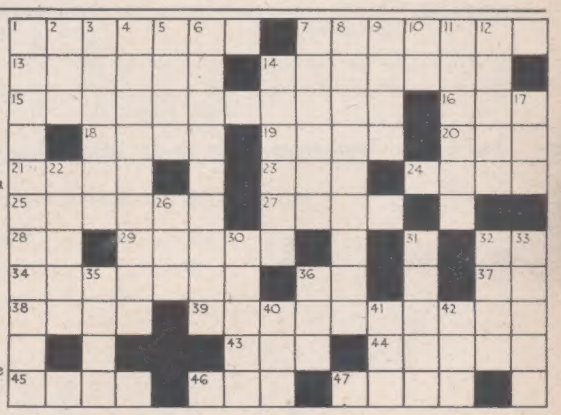
1. Mayor and burgesses inclusive.
2. Cut the tape for this.
3. Two in an oyster.
4. Water carriers.
5. A fresh-water fish.
6. Brings back.
7. Habiliment.
8. Kill the fatted calf, perhaps.
9. With tears, perhaps.
10. Negative prefix.
11. Presumably goes to sea.
12. Of more years.
14. Woden's in giving mood.
17. Exercised mandibles.
22. Carries or consumes by use.
26. Matter in part.
30. Mixed tides.
31. Sorry, our mistake.
32. Snap in culinary ware.
33. Synonymous with 41.
35. Lubricates.
36. The banns conceal her.
40. May be illuminating.
41. Possibly company.
42. Extract the wrath from 7 down.

C	A	S	T	E	L	L	A	T	E	■	I	M	A	N
A	M	E	R	C	E	■	I	R	R	I	T	A	T	E
T	A	M	E	R	S	■	L	A	R	D	■	N	T	■
A	Z	I	M	U	T	H	■	M	■	I	O	N	A	■
C	O	■	O	■	E	S	P	I	O	N	A	G	E	■
O	N	E	R	O	U	S	■	L	■	M	E	■	O	N
M	■	A	S	C	R	I	B	E	S	■	■	A	T	■
B	A	R	■	C	A	T	A	S	T	R	O	P	H	E
S	I	N	G	U	L	A	R	■	A	I	R	S	■	R
■	R	E	E	L	■	T	E	A	R	S	■	I	R	E
B	E	R	E	T	■	E	S	T	E	E	M	S	■	D

Solution to last week's puzzle.

CLUES ACROSS

1. They sometimes charge.
7. And this is charged in another sense.
13. Not to be seen through.
14. Endless time.
15. Not zealously.
16. Aid for the lady.
18. Turn of the wind.
19. Side for those which are cast.
20. Only half letter.
21. Something due here.
23. Take a globe out of its planetary path.
24. At the heart of something.
25. Start again.
27. Past plural of half 37.
28. This for motorists (abbreviation).
29. May be dark and unfathomed.
32. Take the parent out of 13.
34. Moved with high steps.
36. Word of position in 26.
37. Article found in 32.
38. Double singular for this river.
39. Ginger tins (anagram).
43. Tawny.
44. Not for the better.
45. Home, possibly in tree-top.
46. Beast of passage.
47. Role of learning.



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A BROAD HINT

It's the kiddies who will do the coaxing once you introduce them to Kellogg's Rice Krispies. How they smile at the merry snap, crackle and pop of the delicious toasted rice bubbles when cold milk or cream is poured on! And how quickly their spoons get busy!

Don't worry about the way they gobble them up—Rice Krispies are as easily digested as they are wholly nourishing. Welcome at any time of the day—breakfast, lunch or for a wholesome between-meal snack.

No cooking needed. Rice Krispies reach your table oven-fresh in the sealed WAXTITE bag inside the packet. Sold by all grocers.

Kellogg's

RICE KRISPIES

7½d Per Packet

457

"Tell him to Get Gibbs!"

It's Super-Fatted!

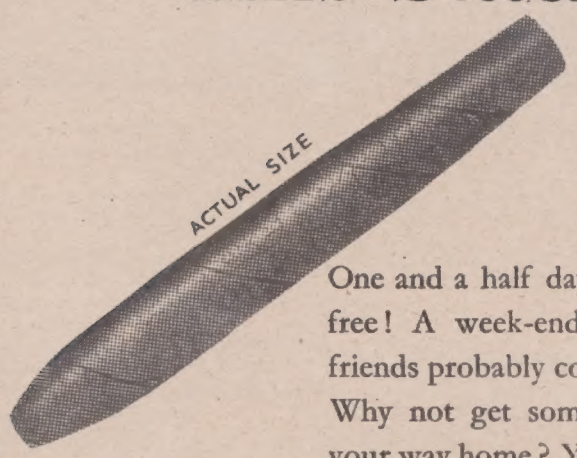
Super-fatted means a lot to all shavers. It is *essential* to those with tender skins.
The extra enrichment, and the pure ingredients of Gibbs Super-Fatted Shaving Cream ensures a quick creamy lather—which stays moist.
You get a clean close shave.
Your face is left cool and comfortable as if massaged with cold cream.

CHANGE TO GIBBS TO-DAY!

GIBBS SUPER FATTED SHAVING CREAM

G346B

This Saturday



One and a half days absolutely free! A week-end at home—friends probably coming round. Why not get some Whiffs on your way home? You've surely earned a *luxury* smoke.

WILLS'S WHIFFS

HAVANA FLAVOUR AT REASONABLE PRICES

3 for 6° 6 for 1/- 12 for 2/-

W.W.17.

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☐ Chemical Engineering	☐ Radio
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Name..... Age.....

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X EVERY TIME YOU SEE A COUPON LIKE THIS, OPPORTUNITY IS KNOCKING AT YOUR DOOR

TOO MUCH OR TOO LITTLE MOISTURE RUINS A CIGARETTE. SO KENSITAS COSTLIER TOBACCOS* ARE MOISTURE CONTROLLED RIGHT UP TO THE TIME OF YOUR PURCHASE

Mr. Will Hay made this MOISTURE CONTROL Test:

1.	**HERE IT IS—YOU TRY HIS DRASTIC TEST!—** Mr. Will Hay put an inch of water in a flat-bottomed dish.
2.	He placed a 20 packet of KENSITAS in its new Moisture Control wrapping, top end down, in water so that packet stood upright with its sealed end submerged. He did the same with a 20 packet wrapped the usual way and laid a weight across the packets to hold in position.
3.	After five minutes, he lifted the weight, placed packets one on top of other, flat on water, replaced weight, and left submerged for five more minutes (packets were both completely covered with water).

RESULT: On opening, cigarettes wrapped usual way were wet. KENSITAS COSTLIER TOBACCOS in the new Moisture Control wrapping were still in perfect smoking condition.

**Your Throat Protection Against Irritation...Against Cough*